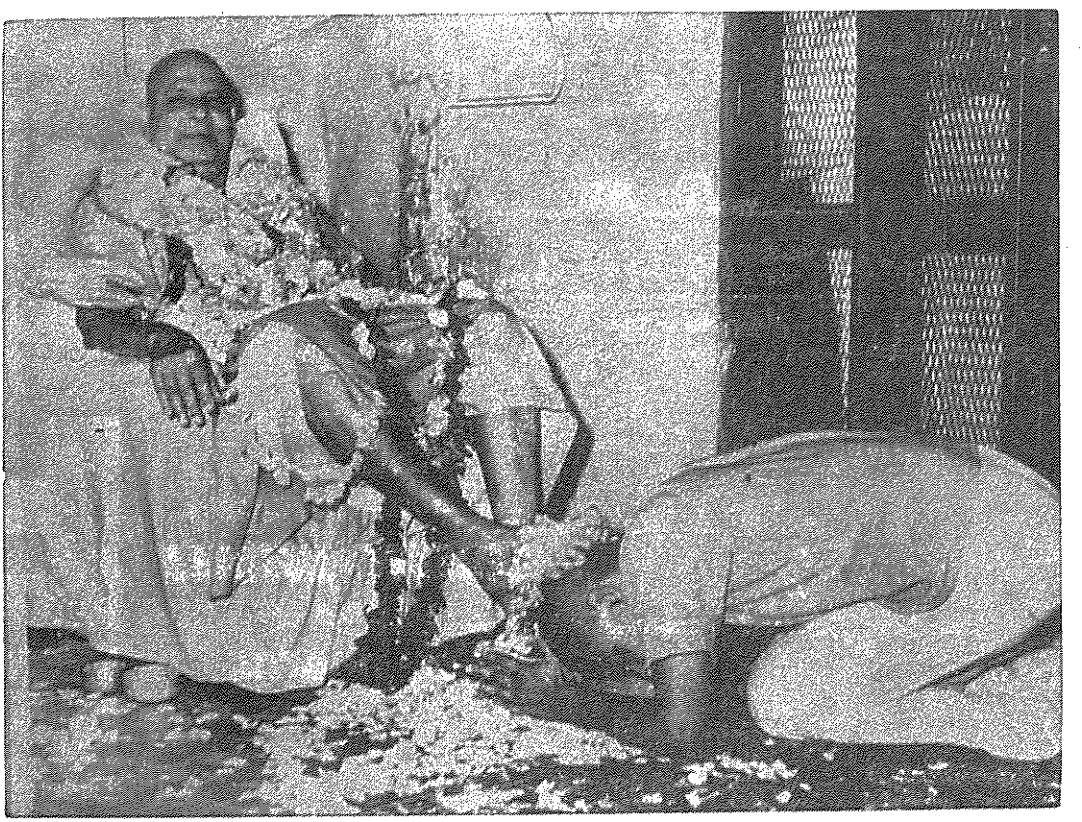
A
SEASON'S HARVEST
1978

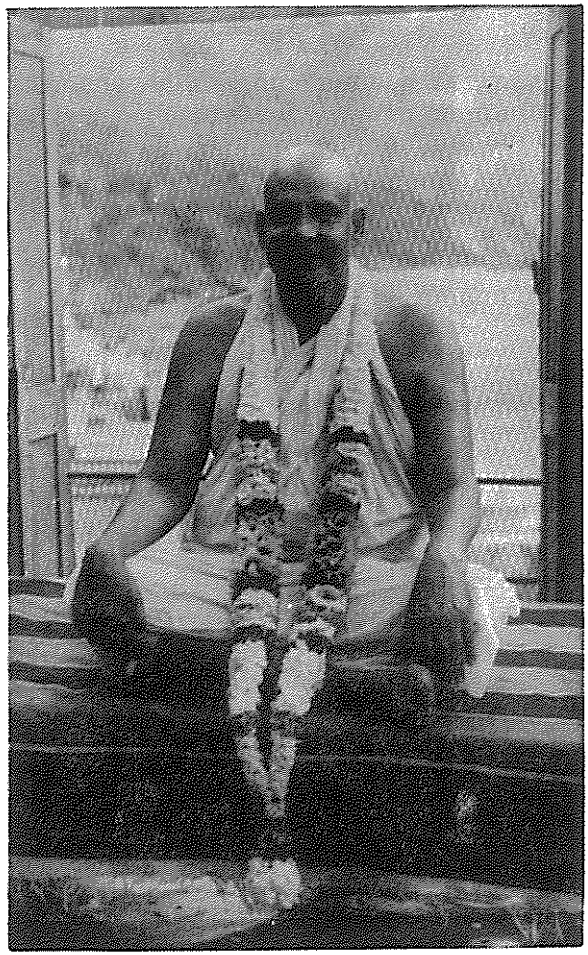


Gurudev Sivananda blessing Swami Venkatesananda

A Season's Harvest

1978
talks by

Swami Venkatesananda



SWAMI SIVANANDA

A SEASON'S HARVEST

Part I

Talks given in the Ashram during the fortnight of the Sivananda Birthday Celebrations in September. p. 1.

Part II

Talks given on the Yoga Sutras in the Ashram. p. 30.

Part III

Talks given on different occasions throughout the island.

Yoga Asanas and Integral Living. p. 84.

The Way to Non-division. p. 87.

The Simple Birth of a Great Divinity "Krishna". p. 90.

The Perennial Light Within. p. 96.

The Significance of The Avatar. p.101.

Who Cuts the Grooves? p.104.

The Mystery of The Soul. p.111.

The Reflecting Mirror. p.117.

Part IV

Natural Action

Talks given on the Third Chapter of The Bhagavad Gita at the Flacq Seminar. p.123.

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I

Talks given in the Ashram during the fortnight of the Sivananda Birthday Celebrations in September 1978.

I

Gurudev's teachings are condensed into these four words - serve, love, meditate, realise. It is usual to say that they represent the four yogas - karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga, and jnana yoga; that is the orthodox approach. Gurudev emphasized that these four should be combined. He was very fond of that and wouldn't allow us to forget. We are not going to be karma yogis, or bhaktas, or raja yogis, or jnanis to the exclusion of the others. He often pointed out that these four were integral, inseparable from one another and that is what we saw in his life. Last year we discussed this in great detail - drawing lessons from his life. This time we will also do so but more emphasis may be on the teachings. It may be necessary to call them karma yoga, raja yoga, jnana yoga or bhakti yoga in order to communicate.

If we do not call these by their names what do they become? They simply become life. This was the beauty in Gurudev's case, that he taught us how to live and therefore life itself becomes yoga, becomes Divine. It is not as though I have to abandon a thing called diabolical life, worldly life, and come to a thing called Divine Life. There is an inner alchemy which brings about an inner revolution that makes life itself Divine. It does not demand a deliberate abandonment of what is natural. This of course is a big thing - what is natural we don't know. It does not demand the abandonment of anything except a funny notion, a funny idea that I have that "This is secular life and that is sacred life, this is diabolical life and that is Divine Life, this is worldly life and that is Divine Life." There is a notion in your mind which says that, "This is worldly and must be given up." That IS given up and it drops away when the Divine dawns. Divine

means light, Deva in sanskrit means light and day in English also means light. So without trying to fiddle around with the superficialities of our life can we find the Divine in life? Swami Sivananda declared, "All life is Divine". So if life is Divine, can we discover it? Why do I put it that way, "If life is Divine?" That already suggests a doubt. In him there was no doubt. Can I become aware of the fact that life is Divine? That itself took the form of karma yoga - serve, bhakti yoga - love, contemplation - meditate and realise.

These are not three or four different compartments so that I can practise some bhakti yoga, and then graduate, go into the Himalayas, meditate and go into a deep cave and attain self-realisation. Atma-jnana must be attained wherever I am, not in some other place because the Atma is here. The self being here and now, self-realisation must be had now. It is now wherever you are, not after you abandon something and go there and do this and do that. I wouldn't even say he encouraged people to go to Rishikesh to become swamis and sannyasis. He also did not discourage. That entirely depended upon your karma. Your karma might be that you must be here, or that you must go away there, that you must lead a married life, or that you must be a bachelor. It does not even depend upon us. That depends entirely upon your karma.

But in spite of all this can I discover this Divine in life in any situation in which I am? That was his genius - unlike some other teachers he did not specify that you must either become a pujaree or a meditator, or a hatha yogi or become learned in Vedanta. Doing whatever you are doing, can you at the same time discover the Divine in life? The diabolical feelings, thoughts that arose in the shadow of ignorance disappear. That's all that goes. Nothing else goes. And when the sun of wisdom rises, then the shadow disappears and along with it all these diabolical feelings and thoughts disappear. Life goes on. So in his case yoga meant life, not a specific form of activity but life, the life being linked to the Divine, re-linked to the Divine. The Divine in life being rediscovered is yoga. If that is not there, there is no yoga.

We may have to talk about these four on four different evenings. Does that mean that these are different and that

there is some sort of gradation, that from service I graduate to love and then meditate and then realise? No, I may say 'first' because it comes first. If four of us are walking along the road on a footpath, we go one behind the other, not because one man is first, the other is second, the third is third and the fourth is fourth, but just because we have four bodies. The four bodies cannot walk together, four bodies at best can walk only side by side, laterally or one behind the other. What is meant by going together? You get into me and I get into you? So, since that problem is there, these things are described one after the other as if they come one after the other; but that should not create a misunderstanding in us that these are one after the other, "I'm now practising karma yoga and after some time I'll become something else - or karma yoga comes first and then that." It is all together, integral.

For the sake of the talks we will take up the 'serve' first. The most remarkable thing that we noticed in Gurudev's case is a perfect example or illustration of that beautiful formula in the Bhagavad Gita;

yogaḥ karmasu kausalam

"Yoga is skill in action."

I don't know if the word 'kausalam' or 'kusala' could be over-simplified in the translation 'skill'. It's a lot more than that. As we go on probably you will discover that. It is skill in a very different sense. It of course means skill in the sense that I am able to operate this tarpaulin skilfully.

There is already another problem. We talk of a skilful doctor, or even worse than that, a skilful politician, or a skilful advocate. By a "skilful doctor" we often imply one who even when he kills, has protected himself. He has done it so nicely that nobody knows - like a skilful thief. A skilful lawyer is one who can twist the truth so beautifully that no one is able to argue with him and you know what a skilful politician is. Does skill then mean cleverness? Unfortunately even the word cleverness has been abused. Cleverness now means, "Oh he is very clever, he cheats people right, left, and centre." And nobody is able to expose him, to see what is happening. Unfortunately these words have been abused and mis-used though probably

originally the meaning was very beautiful.

To understand this skill in action one has to turn to the Buddha. We don't know who came first, probably Krishna, yet the word 'kausalam' is taken up by the Buddha who made it an integral part of his teaching. Nearly every Sutra contains this 'kusalam karma, akusalam karma'. There the true inner meaning is brought out. What is 'kusalam karma', skilful action? Skilful action is that which enables you to discover the Divine within yourself. If that is not there it is un-skilful action. If what I am doing does not lead me to self-realisation it is rotten. If it leads me to self-realisation it is skilful. What is self-realisation? Skilful action. What is yoga? Skilful action. What is skilful action is yoga. So we go round and round.

Yoga is skill in action and skill in action means action that leads smoothly on to self-realisation, self knowledge, to yoga. If it is not there, there is no skill. This distinction, this definition must be borne in mind very carefully,so that whilst the yogi is active he is at the same time aware. If there is no awareness, your self-realisation is lost. If there is no inner awareness "I am doing this", and "I am doing this because I want that", you are lost immediately, however skilful in the ordinary sense of the word your action may be, however good and however noble your action may appear to be on the surface. The action is rotten if this inner awareness is not there, that this is being done by me in order to get there.

If the awareness is there then it raises immediately a couple of interesting sidelights to this awareness, "Aha, I am doing this, who am I?" Perhaps you wondered just now,"I thought you were talking about karma yoga and you're suddenly bringing jnana yoga in." There is no distinction! While I'm doing whatever I'm doing, am I aware, "Why am I doing this - what am I, who am I who is doing this?" Unless I know who I am who does this, I won't know why I do this. We all think we are doing marvellous work. "I'm teaching the world and all people are being stirred!" Soup! Unless I know who I am, if I am not even conscious, if I am not even aware of the source of action, "I am, I am doing this", the source of action,being "I am", my motive cannot be known. If I am not even aware of this (of

course the action proceeds), leaving this process of action, the course of action, I'm trying to find out why I am doing this, thus rationalising it.

Such reasoning is useless. Who is asking the question? The mind. And who is giving the answer? The mind, which suggests "I am doing this in order to spiritually uplift all of you." What happens to the tarpaulin then? If all of us are uplifted, we'll hit the ceiling. So it is only when the attention of the mind is focussed upon the 'me' that says or thinks "I am performing this action", that the motive becomes clear. Otherwise it is not clear. However much you may analyse yourself, however much you may bluff yourself, the motivation is not clear at all, because that which questions the motive is the mind, the answer is also provided by the mind, and the mind does not want to expose itself. When the question arises in the mind and the mind itself provides an answer, the answer is always beautiful. It is very much like my cooking experiment in Sydney. I boiled my own vegetables which I ate, Who can complain against whom? I was always pleased, very happy. I couldn't complain. The mind asking the question, "What is the motive," and providing the answer, "This is the motive," appears to be entirely satisfactory because the real fact or truth is hidden away. We are not even bothered about it. While I am doing this, if the attention is focussed upon the source of this action, then, and only then, the motive is exposed.

It is very beautiful if I can communicate it to you, and this is exactly what we saw in Gurudev. Two things become immediately clear. All actions spring from God or the inner self or life - these three are one, synonymous terms. I don't know what God, or inner-self, or life means. The action springs from there, flows as life from life, from God. This is the essence of karma yoga. Whatever I'm doing; it is happening by God's will. It is happening as part of the flow of life.

The second factor which I also realised at the same time is that while this action springs, wells up and flows from life, from God, something comes in between and says, "I'm doing this and I want that". I have this motivation - which

is called love, or hate or fear. These are the three motivating factors in our life. We do whatever we do in our day to day actions either out of infatuation, or hate, or fear. But the action itself is inevitable. You have to do this. Action itself is inevitable but while the action flows on, the mind throws up some sort of smoke screen which veils the truth and makes it appear as though I am doing this because I am afraid of that, I feel insecure, I hate somebody, or I love somebody.

Swami Nihsreyasananda often says, "It's good to be ambitious, go on building this, building that, put up a garden and be ambitious". Nature or God or life, using your ambition and your desire, cultivates the grounds, and puts up the building - you are not going to take it away. You have enriched the world in the meantime foolishly, or wisely, and the house kicks you out. The garden poisons you and you die leaving all this behind. Whether you want it or not, you are doing some good for other people. What is it that made it possible? It is that inner self, or God or life that makes it possible.

Instead of fooling myself saying that I'm doing this because I love you, I hate you, I am afraid of you, why not become constantly aware - remain constantly aware of this inner self or life from which the action springs. Then life flows smoothly and your mind and heart are clear. In that clear heart God's light is reflected beautifully. That is skill in action. This is what we saw in Gurudev. And he almost always did what he was made to do. If you gave him some advice, he looked at her She gave him another advice, he looked at you. He looked at her, he looked at you as if to say: "Now you settle it between yourselves and then finally come to me, tell me what I must do, I'll do it."

Ramana Maharshi explains the expression,in the Bhagavad Gita,"One who does not commence any action at all" by suggesting that the sage does what he is made to do by others. It is not from his own ambition that he does anything, but his actions are prompted by others, by circumstances. This is what we saw in Gurudev. His attention was constantly on "Who am I" and life flowed on. Such a life is Divine life because life is Divine. You discover that and life flows as Divine life. There is no "I" to throw up or cook up or generate a motivation. This is

the most important part of action, service - the knowledge, "Not I but the Divine generates all this". Action springs from the Divine, from life, from the inner self, not me, not the mind.

But then the action is naturally and normally directed towards somebody or the other. I am talking to you. Now that I have discovered with this inner insight that it is not "I" that is talking but the Divine energy that is talking, the Divine intelligence that is making this possible, one problem is solved. There is no motivation. But what about you? Skill in action demands that both the ends of the stick must be clearly understood. The "I" must be understood as non-existent. While doing so the Divine becomes clear. But, why am I talking to you and not to other people? If I do not understand what the "you" is, then again some motivations come up, some value judgements come up. You are good people and therefore I am in your company and I am talking to you. <u>They</u> are bad people, I want to avoid them. Once again the ego has sprung up and though it apparently was prevented from forming a motivation within itself, it has succeeded in dividing the world into two camps, "I move only with the good people - they are all bad people."

So skill in action demands that there again I must see, towards whom this action is flowing. Towards you? What is you? What is he? What is she? Because, if I make some value judgement here, considering you good people and the others whom I don't talk to as bad people, then the ego comes back through the back door and anytime you hate someone, you dislike someone, and you don't want to teach someone, you are going to call them bad. Why are they bad? Because I don't teach them. And why don't you teach them? Because they are bad. A circular argument which makes no sense at all.

So, the awareness that discovered or uncovered the veil of ignorance and revealed the inner truth must also be directed towards the objects of your service, your action, and find the inner essence there, not their superficial form, not the superficial description or designation but the inner essence. The inner essence in me as also in them is divine; the essence beyond the I, beyond the me, beyond the ego-sense is divine and it is that divine that is spread out throughout the world.

And this is karmasu kausalam. (skill in action).

Must I treat the work as work? Then I am a worker. If you treat the work as labour, even if you dignify it by calling it "labour of love", it is still labour and you are a labourer. You're doing exactly the same thing. A wife cooks at home and she may also take up a job in a restaurant and cook there. There she is a servant, not somebody's wife. There she is a labourer, here she is doing something out of love, she's a wife and the mother. So the job may be the same, but the inner attitude may be different. If I do it as service, I become a servant of God and if I do it as worship, I become a worshipper, a devotee, divine. There is a beautiful verse in the Bhagavad Gita, which means "Treat everyone of your actions as a flower of worship which you offer in adoration at the feet of the omnipresent god." This is what we saw in Gurudev. He never interfered in the course of life but he was constantly aware that life springs from the divine, it is divine and it flows on. In its movement itself there was this divinity and there was nothing other than divinity.

Will such a one tolerate what one calls evil? Evil does not arise in his presence. I have seen this many many times. Even if someone was wicked, even if Gurudev didn't take any action, they just left and went away. This does not mean again that he would not take strong action. He would. Not he, but that also must come from God. This is the tricky part of the sage's behaviour. The sage or the enlightened being might even appear to be a strict disciplinarian, or chastiser, but it is not he that does it, even that springs from the same god. And even the person to whom this strict action is directed, the sage sees as god himself. That's very difficult to understand. If you set this book called Yoga Vasistha alight, it'll burn. Does fire hate it while burning it? No, not at all. Fire may even love it, embracing it in its affection and love and thus burn it.

So there is some part of the sage's personality which the human mind,the unenlightened mind cannot grasp. Gurudev could be very strict, very tough, very strong. He himself used to call it Rudra avatara. "You think I am so soft and kind? If I take rudra avatara, you can't even stand in front of me." He

would be like fire, blazing fire. But that is not done out of any of these three motivations - love, hate, or fear. That also has to happen. That is life.

From this state of ignorance we must awaken ourselves to the state of inner awareness - Who am I, from where does this action spring - and see that action takes place in life. That is divine. Towards whom is this action directed? To the same omnipresent God. As long as this temporary feeling of "I am doing this" exists, so long that temporary feeling must also be fed with the feeling "I am doing this as an act of worship of the omnipresent god". This is skill in action and that is service.

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The next word in Gurudev's teachings was the word 'love'. Before we can go into that we must go back to the discussion on service. When does service become service? I explained yesterday that there is a distinction between work, labour, service and worshipfulness. As a matter of fact, in both Christian and Hindu religious traditions the word 'service' also means worship. Church service means the worship conducted in the church. In the same way the word 'seva', used in connection with temples in India, means worship, too. So there is no real difference between these two words service and worship, which implies that service in order to be service must be worship, otherwise it is labour. When will this action that I do become service or worship; when will it cease to be work or labour? Only when there is love; love in the sense of devotion, not in the sense of emotion.

You are doing something, you are picking up a flower and offering it at the feet of the murthi of Gurudev, or Venkateswara or Vishnu. Does it automatically become worship? No. Does it automatically become service? No. It is an action, that is the best you can say. You can say that picking up a flower from a basket and throwing it on an image of God is an action. That action can be labour. That action can be work. That action can be service or worship. So if you appoint me

as the pujaree (priest) here and say: "Swami, you perform the puja here, I'll give you 20 cents a day", and I'm very religiously picking up the flowers and throwing them at the statue, saying the prayer, there is no devotion at all. It is not service. It is really work or labour. I'm not worshipping the image of God, but I'm really doing a job in order to get the 20 cents from you. I could be either a labourer or a robber. I may not do it correctly, I may not do it well, and so rob you of your money. But what is it that distinguishes service, in the sense of worshipfulness, from labour or work. It is love when I want to do it, when I love to do it.

This is what we saw in our relationship with Gurudev. Often he himself taunted us: "I'm sure you didn't work as hard even when you were in the Government service". Obviously not. There we didn't love the Government. We were doing something, pushing something here and there in order to get the money out of the Government, but in the ashram when we were with Gurudev, we loved every moment of it. The more the merrier. So what makes work a service? What sanctifies an action? Love.

Now, can this love be cultivated or expressed, applied? "Expressed" is an important word. Can love be expressed like toothpaste? When love is expressed it becomes emotion, movement external. When does this emotion become devotion. The same motion is there, though the letter is changed from 'em' to 'de' - devotion; that is, there is depth. It is not external, it becomes deep, deep within me. Baba Muktananda says very often that you must love yourself, which is very beautifully interpreted by his chief disciple Amma to say that loving the self does not mean becoming selfish, does not mean loving the 'me', the personality, but something far deeper, far beyond. That from which the action arises, at that point, there must also be love. There is love. The action springs from the Divine, not me. The 'me' merely comes up and pollutes it like smoke. Action comes from somewhere else, from God, from the Lord. When this 'me' or the self or selfishness is removed, then what manifests there is love. It cannot be expressed. It need not be expressed. What is expressed is only the selfishness that comes out.

So once again we see that this simple little word 'love'

involves deep contemplation, and self-understanding or self-knowledge; deep contemplation which may be called Raja Yoga, self-knowledge which may be called Jnana Yoga. This love is realised,not expressed, in mutual service, worshipful service, and therefore Karma Yoga comes in. It is not merely bhakti or emotion, it is not emotion at all. Love is not emotion. Swami Sivananda showed emotion occasionally, as occasion demanded, but he was not an emotional person at all, even though he was very sociable, and loved to mix with people.

He was not weak either. Emotion is usually weak, or promotes weakness. If you are emotionally involved with me you are prepared to encourage me in wrong action. That he would never do. One could not take advantage of him. He might glorify you to the skies, but if you did some mischief, aha! the same love became bitter medicine then. With the same love and affection he would give you this medicine - 'Stop there, enough'. We have a completely wrong notion of love,completely warped and twisted. In order to see real love in action one had to go to Swami Sivananda. One who was total love found no need to express it. Only if one entered in the spirit of Swami Sivananda could one realise that whatever he did was love. Even if he picked me up and threw me outside, even that was supreme love. Because in his heart there was no room for anything else. What is it that distorts this love in our hearts, veils this love in our heart? Selfishness. And that selfishness was completely absent in him. In our case it is selfishness that pretends that there is love and it is selfishness that veils love which means selfishness is what we are. If it suits that selfishness I tell you I love you, and where it does not suit that selfishness - "Well, something has happened, sorry, you're not worthy of my love". So in our case both the propeller as well as the veil of love is selfishness. In his case selfishness was absent and therefore there was no propelling, there was no restraint. Love flowed. In what manner it flowed he didn't know, you didn't know, I didn't know. That was the beauty.

So where are we? What do we do? He gave us a few simple teachings. One - see God in all: "See God in every face".

How do you see God? "See God in every face" is one of the most fundamental teachings of Swami Sivananda. If you are able to see God in all, then there will be love. If I see all of you as God then there will be no selfishness in me. And if I see God, not only in those faces, but in this face, my face also, then there is no selfishness - Divine within me and Divine around me everywhere. In that heart there is no room for selfishness. But how do I see God in all? He has introduced this in the Universal Prayer also: "Let us behold Thee in all these names and forms, let us love Thee in all these names and forms, let us serve Thee in all these names and forms". How?

There are specific teachings too. One such specific teaching is, "Don't hurt anyone in thought, word or deed". Don't hurt anyone's feelings, So when the impulse arises - when you want to shout at somebody, insult or taunt somebody realise -"I shouldn't do this". For two reasons: one, Gurudev says you must see God in the other person; and two, Gurudev says there must be love in your heart. When I am tempted to abuse someone, obviously love takes leave of my heart. There is something wanting in my own heart, I must fix that. And at that moment the vision or the possibility of seeing God in the other person is also lost. A double loss. So I don't want to do it.

"Never hurt other's feelings, be kind to all". Be kind to all, not because my kindness is going to help the other person but because that is the way to ensure the discovery of the Divine in all. And that is the only key to this love. I cannot love the other person if "I" am still there, if the selfishness is still there. If selfishness is there and I begin to love the other person, the selfishness will take over, will try to exploit. And if I treat the other person as a person, then again the selfishness will come up and try to twist the love. So Gurudev left all that completely alone - not fiddling with all that. Try to deal with this problem from a different angle - don't hurt anybody.

When you are tempted to hurt someone, look within and see - "Where does this come from?" If I am leading the Divine life of love and service, how is it that, in my heart where I am trying to cultivate love, there is this diabolical feeling that

I should hurt the other person? No. Restrain it. And in the course of that restraint you will learn to understand yourself better, self-knowledge, Atma jnana. While you are watching and observing yourself you are practising meditation, and you discover this diabolical tendency in your relationship with the others. You know the usual excuse: "I want to love all, but then she comes and provokes me, and if I go on tolerating her, she'll become a devil, so for her own good I'm twisting her tail." Then Gurudev came around and said: "Bear insult, bear injury, this is the highest sadhana." Why must I bear insult and injury? If you want to see God in all, take everything as his prasad. If you are serious that you want to see God in all, whatever God gives you in that form, take it as prasad (God's gift). You hit me, that is what God gives me through you. Good, very good. Why? Because the self is still there.

I said a few minutes ago that Gurudev could even throw somebody out. It could happen. If you were to do that, it might happen when you have transcended the self completely. But till then, as long as you are aware of the self, the selfishness in you, bear insult, bear injury. As long as there is the awareness of the self, of the personality, of selfishness - bear insult, bear injury, this is the highest sadhana. Once you have gone beyond that, once you are enlightened it is possible that you may even wage a war and become a Krishna, a Bhishma, or a Sivananda. Till then, bear insult, bear injury. That is, what comes to you from others is God's prasad, God's gift, even if it appears to be insult or injury. In this way, it does not provoke. One big excuse is defused. You insult me, you kick me, you boot me around. I've no excuse to retaliate, because you are my God and this is what you want to give me - thank you, God.

In his life, we saw even this. When he was insulted he smiled cheerfully. But if we committed a blunder or a mistake or we misbehaved, he could be very harsh. At the same time if someone else insulted him, he was completely passive and smiling. Why? "Bear injury, bear insult, highest sadhana." That which is the Divine in Swami Sivananda recognises that we needed a certain training, a certain discipline. That had to be administered. He didn't do it deliberately but it happened.

In his relations with the public, he never bothered even to answer a criticism. Bear insult, bear injury. He felt: "God has appointed him to insult me." If he is God, then it is God who is giving me some prasad in this manner. Prasad need not always be sweetmeat. Prasad can also be a little bit of bitterstuff. So this is something bitter, a bitter pill - it may be necessary, only God knows. "Never hurt others' feelings, be kind to all, bear insult, bear injury, this is highest sadhana," were his teachings.

When these two can be deliberately cultivated in our relationship, I can check myself, I can ensure that my behaviour is in accordance with these two principles. When I walk along this path not hurting anybody, I find myself slipping now and then. When I slip I look within myself and see - Oh, my God, the self is still there, that is why I slip. That is why the love is not there, something else comes up. Then I enter into meditation to discover where this vengefulness, this rudeness, this cruelty, this unkindness arises; and when that is dealt with there is love. There is discovery of this love. Love has to be discovered, not cultivated.

The motions of love can be cultivated, you can smile, you can fold your palms. All these can be cultivated, but the real truth concerning love, the real love within your heart cannot be cultivated; it has to be discovered. What is the cover? Selfishness is the cover. Attachment is the cover, hate is the cover, fear is the cover, and when I remove that cover, I discover this love within me. It is there all the time. Never hurt other's feelings - bear insult, bear injury. When you want to see God in all, when I want to love God in all, what is it that feels happy when someone - the same God - praises me - and what is it that makes me unhappy when the same God in some other form says something which is not praise? Even that is God, even that comes from God. When one understands this, then one grows in love. All the other motions of devotion that we engage ourselves in, such as puja, kirtan, japa and one thing more which Gurudev was very fond of: Vibhuti yoga, seeing God in nature, seeing God in the mountains, seeing God in the sun, in the moon, stars, in holy men, in holy places, holy statues - all these are meant as exercises which aid the discovery of

God. This is not devotion at all. A statue or a murthi, or whatever it is - these are aids, and with the help of these and of this Vibhuti yoga the vision expands. For the present I see God in a church, a temple or a mosque or holy places like this, then I realise that essentially what went into the building of the church is also what went into the building of a cinema - brick, stones, cement, plaster, wood. Why should I regard only that as Divine, why not this also as Divine? So there is an expansion of heart. I see a holy person, I bow down, I see God in him. But the other man who is lying there dead drunk, his body and this saint's body are also the same - why not see God in that also? So gradually the vision expands. Thus all these practices aid or help in the discovery of love. Love cannot be cultivated as such, but these aids can be cultivated. I can cultivate the habit of not hurting others. I can cultivate the habit of bearing insult and injury. These are possible and these aids eventually lead to the discovery of this love within me. Love has to be discovered within oneself and when that love is discovered, it transforms daily life into Divine life, and it transforms all actions, all work and all labour into service or worshipfulness.

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III

The third word which represents the other aspect of Gurudev's teachings is of course 'meditate'. He insisted that meditation is not possible without physical, mental and moral discipline. Meditation is part of what is considered raja yoga in orthodox terminology. He emphasized again and again that yama and niyama are vital for meditation. There was one big speciality in his case; a characteristic that was unique in him in that he said, "Don't wait until you are fully established in yama and niyama."

I think most of you know what yama and niyama means - a very highly disciplined life. According to orthodox doctrine yama consists of truth, non violence in thought, word and deed, purity, total absence of greed and the hoarding tendency. In

order to be established in all this the orthodox tradition suggested for instance that you must not have uttered one word of falsehood for twelve years. Then you could say, "I'm established in truth - satyam". If you have not spoken one harsh word or even had one aggressive thought in you for 12 years, then you could say, "I am established in ahimsa". If after 11 years you bluff somebody or you are angry with somebody, all that is gone. You must start all over again, for another 12 years. If you did that it's quite possible that you may need about ten, fifteen births before you could get established in one aspect of this yama. So Gurudev said, "Please remember without yama and niyama your meditation is not meditation, it is only an attempt at meditation." You can sit and close your eyes and think you are meditating - you are not meditating. Your meditation is not effective.

In order to be able to enter into that state of meditation, the heart must be pure and the mind must be still. If these two are not there your meditation is bogus. You can call it what you like. "Still" does not mean dull but like the flame of a candle. The flame of a candle is not dull. It's burning furiously, but it is still. That sort of stillness we are looking for. A certain stillness in dynamism, which is karma yoga, is essential. There must be intense dynamism and yet a tremendous stillness, which is possible only if we have rightly understood what we discussed the day before yesterday in service. Is the mind constantly looking for the source of this service, for the Being, the omnipresent Being that I am serving? Then the mind is still. Though you are busily engaged in all sorts of activities, the mind is still.

Only if you have learned to love the Divine essence in yourself, and in all, the core or the fundamental being within and everywhere, which we call God, can your heart be pure. Otherwise it's not pure. It is full of attachment, hate and fear. And even if you are good and even if you do good sometimes, it is only because either you are attached to the person to whom you are doing good, or you're afraid of the person, and therefore you are doing good, or you hate somebody and therefore you do good to someone else. All our love, all our affection is based on these wretched evils.

They who suggested that without meditation your heart cannot become pure, took another line of approach. They said, increase your period of meditation, then your heart will become pure and your mind will become steady. I heard it from a very great yogi who says, even if your attention wanders constantly, insist upon sitting in your asana. Don't move. And if your mind is unsteady, sit long. If you feel sleepy, sleep. But don't get up. This is one approach. So they said, merely increase the time of meditation, the duration of meditation, and you will achieve something else. This is basically the hatha yoga approach. Hold your breath for longer periods - two minutes, three minutes, five minutes - and the mind will become steady, still. And by some unknown process the heart will also be purified.

But Gurudev's approach again was slightly different. We can see the beauty of it only if we bear in mind that the approach was totally integral. Sitting in what is called meditation, for two and three hours may lead, according to Gurudev, to a state of dullness which might often be mistaken for meditation. I don't think you will either understand or appreciate what I am saying unless you have been to the Himalayas and seen some of these extraordinary characters. You tend to mistake the expression on their face for serenity, but it is dullness. They are dead. There is no meditation there.

So meditation is not dullness. Stillness of the mind must be dynamic, purity of heart must be in relationship. I can lock myself in my room and pretend that I have purity of heart because, I've not told any lie , I've not done any mischief, I've not been aggressive and I'm quietly sitting there. But then how do you know that the heart is pure? If at midnight you switch off the light, you can turn round and say that the room is empty, there is nothing in the room, because you don't see anything. That is only because you're not <u>seeing</u> at all. It is possible to misunderstand such a state for meditation.

We had a remarkable young man who used to sit on a block of stone on the Ganges' bank every day from four to seven in the morning. And one day he happened to get up at a time when Gurudev was still sitting and talking to us after the morning meditation class. He came and Gurudev looked at him: "Uh, ha,

ayo, deep meditation?" "Yes, Swamiji." He thought he was being appreciated. After a little while Swamiji said, "Ahh, look at him, sleepy, drowsy, dull - meditating? What do you mean - meditating? Look at his face. Is that what you call a meditation." Then he fired. "Here, go, go to the Ganges, take two buckets, get some water and fill up our kitchen tank, then you will know what meditation is!" I still remember what he said on that occasion, it was beautiful. "If you do some real meditation, you could roll up space and pick up the earth and play like a tennis ball. Such power, such energy you will have. You feel so dull and drowsy and you say you have been meditating?"

Quite likely by the technique that he was adopting he was relaxed and without much physical or mental agitation. But the mind is not agitated when you are fast asleep, so what is the difference between meditation and deep sleep? You can relax your body and your mind by whatever technique of meditation you practise. That's very good, there's no harm in it. But it's not dhyana, it's not the meditation that we are interested in. If you want deep relaxztion, have it. Call it meditation if you want, that is your business. If you want to make your mind completely dull,and that's what your're looking for, go ahead.

What is it that Gurudev called meditation? That's quite different. That meditation had to become part and parcel of our life. That meditation is the light that shines constantly in our heart throughout the day, whatever you are doing. In that light there is tremendous insight. It is as if God within you has suddenly become awake and he is watching your thought, word and deed. Then the miracle is done. You don't have to struggle with your mind and with your evil tendencies, vasanas and evil habits. Meditation really meant awakening this God within; in a manner of speaking.

Then you can instantly see why and how purity of heart and stillness of mind are there. When this insight, this God-consciousness is awake within you, your heart is afraid, ashamed to think of an evil thought and your mind has no motivation at all to get disturbed. It's true that other evil tendencies might be so strong that this doesn't last and therefore the other meditation practice becomes important. I meditate in the

morning and this God-consciousness is awakened. It goes on for sometime during the day, if life is flowing smoothly and there are no serious problems. It's watching, observing my thoughts, my emotions, my life itself so that it effectively prevents wrong emotions from arising in my heart, prevents psychological disturbance, and mental disturbance, but only as long as life is flowing smoothly. If I trip somewhere and happen to bump into something which is not smooth, then the effect of the morning meditation is lost and the old evil tendency takes over. Alright. Come back to meditation in the evening or the next morning.

So Gurudev's meditation meant constant vigilance, a sustaining of this inner light throughout the day and therefore throughout life. When that insight, that inner intelligence, this God-consciousness is awakened within you, then this searchlight dispels the darkness in which wrong emotions or mental disturbances arise. Maybe the insight is not quite steady, but by practice it becomes steady, the past tendencies which give rise to continued wrong emotions and evil thoughts are also weakened by not being repeated.

This is where Gurudev differed from your psychologists who said: "Go on expressing them and they will go away". They don't go away. Every time you express, there is an impress also. You are married to me,you want to hit me, and the psychologist tells you, "Oh, no, no, no, don't suppress that emotion, let it go, let off your steam." Alright, you pick up something and hit me on the head. The psychologist has already told me, "It's only a treatment Swami, please keep quiet and you'll be alright tomorrow," and so I keep quiet. Now you have expressed your anger but that also has produced an impression within you, which is even supported by my quiescence. You say: "Ah, I did the right thing, he also kept quiet! Tomorrow or the day after you will be even more violent and this violent tendency is formed. It is called a tendency because it is built in your tendons, in every tendon, and it's nearly impossible to get rid of it. The way is neither to express nor to suppress, but to allow this tendency to confront this insight. I rouse this God-consciousness or inner intelligence - this insight or the inner light - in the morning meditation and keep it steadily burning and every tendency, every thought,

every emotion that arises is confronted by this light. If the light is weak naturally the tendency may even repeat itself. The bad habit might overcome, overpower you, but the light is still there. Never mind. And as it goes on and on, the tendency is weakened and the light survives and succeeds, triumphs. That was his method.

What does one meditate upon? One meditates upon a grass mat or a blanket folded and placed underneath, or a deer-skin or some tiger-skin. But that is only an external seat. What does one meditate upon? Gurudev was Patanjali himself in that respect, he allowed almost total freedom.. Why? Because the object of your meditation has to be something which is congenial to you, which your heart is devoted to, which your mind regards as spiritual, sacred, divine. Otherwise the mind rebels. It is as simple as that. Any symbol of God you might choose, any picture, any visual, audiovisual symbol, audio in the sense of being the mantra. You use a mantra and you use a symbol. Can one meditate without these? Theoretically, technically yes, practically no. I don't think he ever even talked about the nameless, formless meditation. I've never heard him really teach somebody, "This is nameless, formless meditation". Why didn't he encourage or prescribe such practices? For the simple reason that it doesn't matter what you are meditating upon. That is only a trigger. The object you have chosen to meditate upon is merely a key, a trigger. You may use a key or smash the door and enter the room, why not use the key. But the key is merely to open the door. Once the door is open you don't even need the key, you throw it away. So he did not discourage people from using a mantra and a form, he positively encouraged them. If a young boy or girl went to him and asked him: "Swami, I want to meditate, what must I do?" He would say: "Oh, do japa, repeat a mantra and visualise a form of God within yourself". I don't think he even specified, whether to visualize the form of God in my heart or in my forehead." Do what comes naturally. And sometimes people even want to know, "When I am visualizing an image of God, let's say in my heart or forehead, must that God be facing me or facing out?" See what happens. This is only the key. Why are you meditating?

Why are you meditating? You are meditating in order to discover yourself, to saturate your mind with "Om namah Sivaya".

Even though you are using this name and form, the object of meditation is to discover the self. What is the self, what does it do, what is its nature in meditation? The nature of the self in meditation is both the object and the subject of meditation. When you say I am mentally repeating God's name, what on earth do we mean? Where is "mental repetition"? What is it made of? It is the self. The sound in the mental repetition of a mantra, the form that you visualize within you is also you - the same self. So what's wrong in visualizing a form of God, in repeating a mantra, knowing that it is self, non-different from self? Who is the subject or the meditator? The self again. Immediately you've commenced repeating the mantra and visualizing this form, this enquiry into the nature of the self begins. What is all this? In order to understand even the question, "What am I seeing within myself", I sit with my eyes closed. Mentally I am repeating a mantra, and I am seeing an image of God within me. What on earth does that mean?

No effort is needed at all from there on. That question, that quest itself has sufficient energy to still the mind, without making it dull, because I have not answered this question, "What is all this? I see something, I hear something within myself." When that question becomes serious then there is tremendous stillness without dullness and sooner or later there is a discovery that both the things that I visualize within me and the self that is meditating upon all this are the same.

There you have discovered the mind, its vagaries, and then you begin to see the world in a different light. I visualized a picture of God, an image of God. It felt very real within me, but when I open my eyes it is not there any more, I see another figure and another form. Maybe this is also another dream, another illusion. There a tremendous transformation takes place in your attitude to life, to other people. If you feel like bluffing somebody, hating somebody or being attached to somebody, there doesn't seem to be much sense in all this. When I close my eyes, I see a different world within myself, and when I open my eyes I see this world outside of myself. The still mind and the pure heart functioning in this bright inner light inside enable us to see that

what was regarded as evil from the orthodox point of view is silly and stupid and there is no need for it. These evil tendencies drop away, not because you are struggling, or fighting with them, but because they have no motivation. When they drop, all these bad habits drop from you because they have no value at all. That is real dropping. If you fight and get rid of it, it comes back to you through the back door. Somebody tells you that smoking causes lung cancer and you give it up. Five years later there is another new research and they say, no, with a filter it is even healthy and then you go back to it with a vengence. So when the mind, the heart or this insight sees that in all these there is no value at all, they drop away without leaving a trace. Since there is no value in all these, even in idleness, or in selfishness, you become unselfish. You become dynamic, not because you want to achieve something but because there is energy. So the meditator is pure at heart and he is dynamic without motivation. That was Swami Sivananda's meditation. Such a life is Divine life.

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IV

The last of the four words is 'realize'. If you go to some great yogis, swamis, they might tell you that God-realization, self-realization means you see God in front of you. It may be right. And if you are talking about self-realization they might tell you that in meditation you will see yourself as a kind of form, a kind of light, a kind of sound or whatever it is. But in all this "I" am still seeing an "object", whereas from what we have been discussing so far, the reality is one, indivisible. Only when the division that is assumed to have arisen in it is abolished, is there love and unselfishness.

As long as the self is, there is a division - I, you, he. And as long as the I, you, he division is there, there is no love and there is no service. Even meditation can be hallucination. Meditation can be either " jada samadhi", that is you are sitting and sleeping very nicely, or hallucination,

day-dreaming, night dreaming. How does one totally abolish this thing called the self? When that self is abolished then the reality is. That is called real - ize, real - is. To realize is to real - is. There is nothing else.

Can I abolish the 'I'? How do 'I' abolish myself? In order to eradicate selfishness or egoism or the vanity which says I am sitting and speaking here, I have to see it clearly. When I see it clearly it becomes an object, not the "self". It is not the self but the object. It is not the subject but the object. I make it an object in order to deal with it. It is the same thing as the world! Now I am telling you that I am a great swami;later I feel that, "Oh, no, that is vanity, that is egoism, it is not right. Ahh, I see my vanity"; I close my eyes and meditate; that vanity or the egoism or the selfishness or that self has somehow become an object! Then I put God or some other image, some other idea there and tell myself (think): "No, I'm not doing anything at all - God does everything through me." The same vanity has come back. You are even more vain now than before. At least in the first instance you were saying: "I am a great man I am speaking". Now you are saying that, "God is great but even he has to work through me!" So this thing called 'realize', God-realization, self-realization is declared to be indescribable.

yato vaco nivartante aprapya manasa saha

This is a mantra from one of the Upanishads. Strangely enough we go on repeating it every day without meaning. What does it mean? "From that reality or the self speech returns, turns away along with mind, unable to reach." That is the literal meaning. When you want to express it, speech turns away from it, along with the mind, unable to express it. Even the mind cannot approach it because what the mind approaches it turns into an object and the self is not an object. According to Yoga Vasistha, when the notion of an object arises in the subject, that is called the object, the world.

So that is the mind. For this reason Gurudev never talked about it. It seems obvious. In all those years I have never heard him speak about it in private - person to person. Occasionally he might have introduced such ideas in talks or discourses or lectures. As a matter of fact he lectured very

rarely. In the ashram it was usual for him to tell young swamis; "You give a talk on "Brahmavidya", and the poor man would squeeze his brain out. And there he would sit nicely listening to it. I don't know if I am being uncharitable. Perhaps he thought that visitors have come from all over the world, all over India and all over the world thinking that Yoga Vedanta is something which can only be learnt from swamis and gurus and so on. Right. And there are all these young swamis here who are itching to talk , so put them together. Someone wants to hear and someone wants to speak. Perhaps Gurudev thought: "Go on, go ahead". It's a game, play it. Why should I get involved in it?" But even when he spoke of Brahman, he used completely different expressions, revolutionary expressions, expressions which might knock out pandits. There was a great saint called "Sada Siva Brahmendra", and he had composed a song in sanskrit:

"Sarvam Brahmamayam Re Re

"Sarvam Brahmamayam...

Afterwards he had his own words, his own expressions. Gurudev picked up the first refrain and wove his own magical ideas into it. He used to sing that song usually on the 31st of December, just past midnight. During 1945, 1946, 1947, till 1952, he was so young, so energetic, that he was more energetic than all of us put together. He used to keep awake very easily at night. The 31st of December was the last day of the sadhana week and so there used to be a drama or some kind of entertainment, music, drama, dance. Swamiji used to wind up the whole thing about midnight; he would come on stage and sing, dance: "Chidanand , chidanand - agada bham, agada bham." Everybody used to "wake" up, even if they were dull. Then he used to sing this:

"Sarvam Brahmayam Jagat

sarvam Brahmamayam..."

So that you may not misunderstand that he is talking about a nameless, formless absolute, he would add,

"Sarvam Shaktimayam...(Don't think that God is a male:)

Sarvam Shaktimayam Jagat, sarvam shaktimayam...

In the place of "shakti", he would add, "Rama", "Vishnu", "Krishna" and so on. Already he had created enough enlightening confusion. He started with: "Sarvam Brahmamayam", went on to Rama, Krishna, Siva, Shakti, all that. He would go on, MatapitaBrahman, Larkaladiki Brahman", "Your father and mother are Brahman, son and daughter are Brahman", You don't go back to goad your children and say, "Look, Swamiji said yesterday that father and mother are God, you must treat us as God." You can't do that because he also said at the same time: Larkaladiki Brahman" - your son and your daughter are also Brahman. So no misinterpretation is possible. You think, "Ah, alright even this seems to be sensible because God pervades all of us". Dud dahi brahman tandai lemonade brahman (Milk, curd, tandai and lemonade are brahman). Tandai is usually a preparation in which bhang is used. Bhang, almonds and sugar candy and other things mixed together with a little milk and that's called tandai. Where are we now? "Sarvam Brahmamayam" and you have come right down to tandai - lemonade Brahman! Garma garam chai Brahman (hot tea is Brahman)...Ah! And then he used to turn round; if there was some harmoniumvala, tablavala he would add, harmoniumvala Brahman, tablavala Brahman, everybody, including the musicians who played the harmonium and tabla are Brahman.

"Sarvam Brahmamayam Jagat,
Sarvam Brahmamayam..."

This is one attitude. That is, don't try to describe Brahman, or the reality or truth. It's indescribable. Even your mind, the highest intellect cannot approach it. The intellect being born of the self, will only function in terms of dualism. It cannot approach the reality. When the self, or rather the notion of a separate self dissolves, self is there. Who is there to comprehend, to describe the totality? So don't make this stupid error. "But then, shall we give up?" No, you cannot give up because this realization is the very foundation on which the other disciplines are built. If the reality is not realized then you're not practising yoga, your action is not unselfish, and you don't know what the self is. You don't know how to get rid of this self and therefore all your actions are selfish, however much you may pretend they

are not. However much you may think you are loving, you are only thinking,you're not loving. You may pretend, you may bluff a million people, but still there is no love when the self is there, the ego is there, the vanity is there, the selfishness is there. It is already divided and even if it loves, it will love selectively - "I love some and I hate some". That is not love.

So realization is vital and yet it is something which is beyond comprehension and description. Now what do I do? Then he came round to the 13th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. He was very fond of this. How do I discover an unselfish state? I cannot do that. But I can and I should recognise the activities of self and vanity constantly. Whether it comes in the guise of a swami vanity, or a yogi vanity, or a director, or whatever it is, that must be recognized. As long as this vanity - "I am so and so" lasts, so long the reality is only a concept, an idea, an object. It's absurd. So can I be aware constantly - "Even this is vanity, selfishness, ignorance, delusion. And there is no realization in this. When I am meditating I am only thinking I am meditating, When I am serving, I am only thinking I am practising karma yoga." "I am practising karma yoga" is already rubbish. "I love God!" Rubbish again. This God is the creation of your own mind. The mind being rubbish, what is created out of this rubbish is more rubbish, so all this is not only defective but dangerous. So he never spoke of this. Watch, watch, watch like a hawk to see when and in what form and how the self manifests itself in you,plays tricks with you.

amānitvam adambhitvam ahiṁsā kṣāntir ārjavam
ācāryopāsanaṁ saucaṁ sthairyam ātmavinigrahaḥ (XIII-7)

indriyārtheṣu vairāgyam anahaṁkāra eva ca
janmamṛtyujarāvyādhiduḥkhadoṣānudarsanam (XIII-8)

asaktir anabhiṣvaṅgaḥ putradāragṛhādiṣu
nityaṁ ca sam$_a$cittatvam iṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu (XIII-9)

mayi cā 'nanyayogena bhaktir avyabhicārinī
viviktadesasevitvam aratir janasaṁsadi (XIII-10)

adhyātmajnānanityatvaṁ tattvajnānārthadarsanam

etaj jnānam iti proktam ajñanaṁ yad ato 'nyathā (XIII-11)

XIII-7. Humility, unpretentiousness, non-injury, forgiveness, uprightness, service of the teacher, purity, steadfastness, self-control,
XIII-8. Indifference to the objects of the senses and also absence of egoism, perception of (or reflection on) the evil in birth, death, old age, sickness and pain,
XIII-9. Non-attachment, non-identification of the Self with son, wife, home and the rest, and constant even-mindedness on the attainment of the desirable and the undesirable,
XIII-10. Unswerving devotion unto Me by the Yoga of non-separation, resort to solitary places, distaste for the society of people,
XIII-11. Constancy in Knowledge of the Self, perception of the end of true knowledge - this is declared to be knowledge, and what is opposed to it is ignorance.

Are these qualities enumerated in the 13th chapter in me or not? If they are there then it is possible that the heart is becoming purer and purer. And in that pure heart it is possible that one day the light of God will shine. The self, which has become transparent, extremely thin and weakened by that time may have a glimpse of this reflection of the Supreme in that pure heart, and collapse. That is the penultimate vision of the Truth, you see that and then the whole game is over.

We adore the Guru as God, because he has come to that point where that self, dying to self, has had a vision of the Cosmic Being, and it dissolves. When that is dissolved, I still see Swami Sivananda, but it is not Swami Sivananda as such, or doctor Kuppuswami as such - it is the gift of God - it is He Himself. It is He Himself using that form in order to communicate this truth to us. If that was not there, there would have been no teacher. If every time a seeker or a yogi has this vision of the ultimate reality, in that pure heart through this transparent self, that person dissolved, then what about us? Who is going to teach us? So it is the Divine, out of compassion and mercy, that somehow descends, enters into and

re-activates that body in order to teach us. And therefore we feel that the Guru is an Avatara of God. What was there before, the tapasvin, the sage, the seeker, Dr. Kuppuswami or early Swami Sivananda is completely dissolved. And what arose out of that is God himself in that form. Therefore he is an Avatara.

So in order to "realize" I must constantly bear in mind that whatever there is, is God. Father, mother - God; son, daughter - God; milk, curd -tandai,, lemonade - God; hot tea is Brahman. "But why is it that I don t have the same feeling?" Watch, observe it. So there is some problem within you - solve it! And at the same time you have this list of noble qualities listed in the 13th chapter of the Gita. I observe within myself these qualities are not there. And I see the self is there. It's playing all the time in diverse manifold ways. Sometimes I think the self has gone - "Ohh, I am free!" That is another trick of the self. Because if it is not there, if there was only one indivisible totality and the self was an illusion, what thought that something had gone away? That is also a trick of the self. So that a man of self realization does not go about saying: "I've attained self realization". That would be a contradiction in terms. So when we enter this path of self realization,Gurudev asks us to do this one thing with this twofold approach. The one thing is constantly to be aware within ourselves: "When God alone pervades everything, why is it I am seeing differences, I feel differences, my attitude towards everything in this world is full of difference. I like, I don't like, I love, I hate." Secondly - am I truly unselfish? Have all the ideas of self, the egoism, the vanity, and all the evils that arise from this egoism, from this vanity, from this selfishness become less and less? Am I still being preyed upon by this selfishness and by this vanity? Constantly to be aware of this, to be vigilantly watchful - that's all Gurudev meant by self realization. When this goes on and on, perhaps unbeknown to yourself your heart becomes pure because, if you are aware your heart is becoming pure, it is impure. If you think: "I am a great yogi", you are the worst rascal. Today I went to Kabir Mandir, Swami Ramsarupdas told me a beautiful verse from Kabir. It says the great man doesn't even say, "I am great", just as a sparkling diamond doesn't proclaim

its value. It is somebody else who says it's a beautiful thing. It lies there like a stone. If even the thought arises in me that I am somebody, there's some error, some trouble, some danger. If one is constantly aware of the truth in this manner it is possible that one day the heart becomes pure and in that heart the light of God is reflected. One day the mind which has been constantly observing itself, becomes still and steady and there is enlightenment.

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II

Talks on the Yoga Sutras given in the Ashram

I

The name Raja Yoga does not occur in the yoga sutras. Only the word yoga occurs. Raja is royal. There are two suggestions why this particular path or method could be called royal in comparison with others. One suggestion is that it is the royal road; you go straight, that is,you don't beat about the bush and you don't do something in order to get something else. That is, you're looking straight into the source of the problem itself, the problems that arise in life. They have a single source and instead of analysing all the factors that may be related to the problem, instead of cutting down the branches and dealing with the trunk, you go straight to the root of the problem.

Another suggestion that occurs I think also in the Yoga Vasistha is that this is Raja Yoga because rajas practise it; it is fit only for kings. We need a bold understanding, a courageous, adventurous spirit. If that is not there, you are useless. If you want to go begging, "God please give me this, God please give me this," don't touch this. This is fit only for royal sages. If you are chicken hearted don't go anywhere near it. Go somewhere else; there are other paths, the chicken's path. They are probably smoother and safer but they have their own difficulties. They are very long winded and halfway through you might completely forget what you started on.

What is the purpose? Why is this yoga or doctrine expounded at all? To point out in utter simplicity that all our problems arise from non-understanding of a very simple truth that whatever there is, is one indivisible whole. If this understanding arises, all problems are dissolved immediately. If there is a headache, I suffer only because I isolate this head from everything else. Gurudev often used to say, if you have a headache,be happy that you have a head. The headache is there because you have a head, it's positive proof that you

have a head.

That's one way of looking at it. If for instance I realise at the moment of having what is called a headache that the head is only a small part of the organism and the rest of the body is beautifully healthy, why shouldn't I be happy about the other parts of the body being healthy? Why should I go on moaning as if the head were the whole being? If I am miserable, it is only because I think I am only this body, this personality, which is not the truth. Gurudev once remarked during a rather disappointing event when somebody had cheated him, "You feel unhappy only because you think you are swami so and so and that the other person is totally different from you. If this vision disappears, you realise that the cheater and the cheated are both limbs of the same being, and you don't feel unhappy about it." There's a beautiful saying in Tamil. If accidentally your own finger pokes your eye, will you cut your finger out? He represents the finger and you represent the eye. Both of you belong to the same organism. It is because of this division, this fragmentation, that has arisen in us that we feel miserable. It is from this fragmentation that all our problems arise. I versus you, I versus he. You wonder: "How do I know that this fragmentation itself is not the truth?" That is the problem. We do not see the fragment as a fragment. For the time being at least the fragment is given the dignity and the validity of the whole. If I have a headache, it is as if the whole world is falling apart, my whole life is ruined.

Again, I am creating fragments in time. You have had a headache which lasted for only one day. You are fifty years old which means there have been so many hundreds and thousands of days when you didn't have a headache. Aren't you happy about it? It is quite possible that you will live for another 50 years, many of the days of which you may not have had the same headache. You are giving that particular moment the dignity and the validity, the glory, the halo of a whole life. It is as if this is the only thing that has occupied your life.

So, the truth or the being is indivisible but somehow in that indivisibility a feeling or an idea arises "I am". That also is not an error. There is an empty space and we build a few houses, plant a few trees, and somehow you begin to think

within yourself that that space has been occupied or there is no space any more. Nothing has ever happened to that space! The space is still there in and through those buildings and those trees. The trees have not swallowed up the space, the trees can never do anything to that space, the space will continue to remain. When this truth is not understood, then the other idea which is a contradiction of the truth arises that the space has somehow been altered, that something else has taken its place. Nothing can take the place of space.

So from this thing called ignorance the notion or the idea that something other than what-is,exists, arises. One thing we should remember here. We are not saying the house does not exist, that the tree does not exist. What we are really saying is that the space in which they exist, still remains. The space now remains as the house, or as the tree; nothing has ever happened to the space. So if I clearly understand the existence of space as a whole or as a totality in which things arise, exist, and dissolve without making any difference to the space in which these things happen, then there is no ignorance. The idea, that that which has arisen in that space has somehow swallowed that space or made a difference to that space, is called avidya or ignorance. The idea that we have taken up so much space is illusion.

An example is given which is very often quoted in these discussions. Mirage. The existence of a mirage, of the appearance of water, is not questioned. In a manner of speaking the illusion exists. What is the meaning of this illusion? You see water there, water does not exist. I am sitting here; of course I am sitting here. Nobody is going to contradict this. But you think that I am something enormous, something big, and I have somehow taken the space, that I exist in the place of the space. That's wrong, the space is still there. In that space there is an appearance of a thing called a swami. The appearance has arisen, the appearance might continue for some time, and then it will disappear. When that truth is seen, a tremendous inner transformation takes place. When the truth is not seen, then what appears to be for the moment is given the dignity of a real substance, real in the sense that it will be there for ever and ever. When that truth is realised, then

life takes on a completely different quality. If that truth is not realised, the I, the ego-sense that arises in the appearance, regards itself as a permanent entity in the place of the total truth. That is, a small fragment, a small thing, takes the place of this truth, of the totality, which is absurd.

Once this fragment has arisen, it develops a relationship, one cloud meeting another cloud, and both of them are going to disintegrate in a little while. In the meantime each cloud thinks it is eternal; "I am", I am so real that whatever there was before has disappeared, I am the whole thing. I am the most important factor and so I develop a relationship with you as if because I am eternal, the relationship is also going to be eternal. Otherwise there is no relationship. If we merely shake hands and say hello, bye, bye, there is no relationship in that. When do you develop a relationship? When you are convinced that you are going to be whatever you are. In our weaker moments we have some glimpse of the reality. But very soon because it arises in weakness, the wisdom also goes away. The stronger forces of ignorance take over. Why do I develop a relationship at all? Because I think I am and I will always be. This relationship usually takes the form of "I like this, I don't like this". Minus these two feelings there is no relationship at all. Gurudev used to say that if you remove these two expressions from your heart, there is no world - I like this, I don't like this. What are they based on? They are based on I. And what is I based on? I is based on ignorance, or non-understanding of the one fact of existence and that is the totality. By repeatedly being affirmed and asserted this error has attained the glory of truth. Nobody is going to deny I am a swami, and in order that we may be secure in this conviction we think that we will be there even after the body is gone. Hopefully I'll go to heaven and stay there for ever and ever. In spite of this hope we are afraid to die. This is another puzzle. I don't want to die but I would like to go to heaven. The tragedy is that without dying you can't go to heaven. That is one puzzle which puzzles even the author of the yoga sutras. Calling it "abhinivesah", Patanjali says that this abhinivesah is self perpetuating, exists even in the wise.

II.9. svarasavāhī viduṣo 'pi tathā 'rūḍho 'bhiniveśaḥ

(Blind clinging to life is an inexplicable yet undeniable fact of life which is self-sustaining (since it is just another phase or face of ignorance) and is therefore found to be a dominant factor even in wise beings as long as the physical body which is the operative seat of ignorance exists. It is the operation of the power that preserves the physical sheath for the unfoldment of self-knowledge, combined with the habit of dependence on objective sources for enjoyment and sustenance and fear of losing them, and the inability to see other states of existence.)

This fragmented I-consciousness is so strong. It has been repeatedly hammered in right from childhood. From the time you give me a name, you call me by a name and repeatedly tell me, "You are so and so, you are my child, you are a Brahmana, you are an Indian". So that probably by the time I am two or three years old I am utterly convinced that I am a young boy, etc. And therefore even when death stares me in my face, I think, "Well never mind, I have been brought up as a very holy man, I will continue to be a holy man even afterwards." The personality feeling is so strong that there is a longing, a wish, a hope that I would somehow survive all that happens here, that I would continue to exist independent of you, independent of the totality, as a fragment. In Vedanta there is even a formula, "I am Brahman", "aham Brahmasmi". "Even if this personality is dissolved, I am the totality." (Of course what the sages really meant when they used this expression was totally different. I only brought it in to show that this I is so strong, that it thinks it is the whole!)

If you put all these things together you realise how strong this I feeling is. When it comes to the practice of yoga, the same feeling arises as: "I must realise God, I must see God, I must have a spiritual experience." Wherever you go whichever way you turn the I is there, and by all these you are digging it in with greater and greater effort.

In the first three sections of the yoga sutras several methods have been suggested to deal with this fragmentation - how to realise this indivisible intelligence. As long as I

regard myself as a personality which is more important than the totality, the problems will continue to exist. So the personality feels: "It doesn't matter if the whole world is destroyed as long as I am alive, or if everybody else goes to hell, as long as I go to heaven, as long as I am secure." It is this personality that says, "I am more important than you, I am more important than the whole world, I am more important than the entire universe." That is the problem with our life. How can this be overcome or solved except by realising the indivisibility of the being?

Now I exist apart from, independent of the rest. There is absolutely no consciousness or understanding or realisation that if I exist at all,it is as one of the billions and billions of beings in this universe. When you think you are very important, so terribly important, so tremendously important, then you are denying the existence of the one indivisible being of which we are all cells. When that totality is realised, understood to be the sole reality, then the fragment is restored to its place. Is that right? I am not going to pull down that tree in order to create space. But I want to realise that tree or no tree, building or no building the space is still there. That is the realisation we are talking about.

In the first three chapters a number of methods are given how to overcome this problem of fragmentation. When the whole totality is immediately realised, then everything exists except the problem. That's the beauty, I don't know if it can be made very clear even during these five days. When the totality is realised, nothing disappears except the error - the erroneous perception of water, not the mirage. You did see the mirage. If you have seen it as a mirage, you're wise, you're perfect, you've realised the truth. If you saw it as water, there is the error. It is when you see it as water that you start running after it. If you saw it as mirage you don't run after it. You probably stand there and look.

That is precisely what happens to an enlightened person. When you assume that the fragmentation that is the personality, is an independent entity, which has to fight for itself, then you begin to develop a relationship with others, they whom you consider others. I love this, I hate this. I like this, I

dislike this. And you think, "My pleasure comes from there". Pleasure is everywhere. Space is uncutable, indivisible. Space doesn't jump out of there and come here. Because you are cut, you think you are isolated from the rest of the universe, you want to develop a special relationship with x or y. With x your relationship is one of friendliness, with y it is one of enmity. You create a problem for yourself. When this totality is realised as the real, then without disturbing anything that exists, the illusion is gone. You see the diversity, you still see the other as the other. You still see the tree as the tree, and your body as a body, but the space is there, it has not gone away. That is space and this is space. There something (tree) has grown, here something else (body) has grown. That appearance appears to be a tree, and this appears to be a man. As appearance they exist, as mirage a mirage exists. There is space and in that space there is an appearance of a tree. Here is space and in this space there is the appearance of a man. That's all. These don't have to be cancelled, these don't have to be rubbed out. What is removed is the error that I am seeing a tree there and I am the swami sitting here. That is where you don't see the mirage but you see water. When you see water, you get excited, you want to run there. When you see an object of enjoyment there, you are excited, you want to run there. But when you see that there is an appearance there and this is an appearance here, that what is there is here and what is here is there, then there is no need to run after one.

How to deal with this tendency to accept or regard this fragment as the whole is the problem that Patanjali addresses himself to. He has given various methods for the realisation of this truth. We shall look at a few sutras in the fourth chapter. The first sutra is very beautiful.

IV. 1. janmau 'ṣadhi mantra tapaḥ
samādhijāḥ siddhayaḥ

(The attainments listed in the previous section are not only the fruits of the threefold inner discipline, but they are congenital in some, and in others they may follow the right and intelligent use of certain medicinal herbs or of certain mantras (mystic formulae or advice)

or they may follow the kindling of the psychic fire.)

This realisation , not only the siddhis or special psychic powers mentioned in the previous section but even perfection or right understanding seems to be related to one or the other of these factors - janma, birth itself, ausadhi, which literally means drugs, the use of mantras, not just one mantra, tapas, austerity, various forms of penance and samadhi. Meditation, concentration, and samadhi - all these have been utilized as means for attaining not only psychic powers but even in reaching perfection or self-realisation. We'll deal with janma tomorrow. But just in passing, how come ausadhi or drugs is mentioned here - it looks as though there are other means of dealing with the distractions of the mind? You must know what those drugs are, and how to use them. In the same way there seem to be special mantras for calming the mind, for enabling the insight to develop. Even tapas, austerity, standing upside down,hanging by the feet tied to a tree and so on have been used.

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II

Of the apparent means for attaining perfection we briefly looked into these three, ausadhi, mantra and tapas. With the help of these three, a certain altered state of consciousness can be brought about in which the reality is realised. When reality becomes clear then error ceases because error is not something which exists. Mirage exists, water exists, but water in the mirage does not exist,has never existed. That it is a mirage is true, that water is water is true, but the seeing of the water in the mirage is error.

When I begin to see the mirage as a mirage, does something go away? Nothing goes away. But something has gone! This is a puzzle which each one has to work out. Nothing has happened. The mirage remains a mirage. There is still the appearance of water there. Something looks like water there but the erroneous feeling that there is water has gone. That's all that goes. Nothing else need go. When the truth is realised, the error disappears without making any change anywhere. That is

the beauty which one has to grasp, by God's grace.

But there is a big change; you don't go there (to a mirage) to have a drink of water. In a state of ignorance, the other things arise; likes, dislike, and craving (I'm mad, I'll die without it). When the error is gone, that craving has also disappeared and therefore in the Yoga Vasistha this is strongly emphasised. There is no visible external difference between the enlightened man and the non-enlightened man or the ignorant man because both of them see the mirage. One of them sees it as water, the other one sees exactly the same phenomenon. Is there no difference between the ignorant man and the enlightened man? There is. In the enlightened man, craving is totally absent. If you find craving in a man, who talks as if he is enlightened, he only talks as if he is enlightened.

Can I pretend that the craving is gone and I am enlightened or as is commonly suggested can I deceive myself? I don't think we are interested in deceiving ourselves. I'm not quite fond of that expression - "deceiving myself". That means that one part is deceiving the other part of myself, doesn't it? The deceiver part is not deceived so why should I identify myself totally with the deceived, why not with the deceiver. The deceiver is a very clever fellow. So I don't think, in pretending to be enlightened, to be highly evolved we are deceiving ourselves - we are always trying to deceive others which is a clever thing to do! I may pretend that all cravings have gone, even though my heart is churned by them. I may pretend to have entered into samadhi, and pretend to be an enlightened person. In that pretension I'm not deceiving myself, but I'm deceiving you, which is a sign of worldly cleverness. So far as the enlightened person himself is concerned, it is a waste of time. Why does a person want to deceive others - for getting a little bit of food, a little bit of money? That you can get even without all this pretension. A little fame, a little name, you can get in a million other ways. So you don't have to pretend to be enlightened in order to get these silly little gains. That is out of the question. In the enlightened man doubt is absent, confusion is absent, but most of all craving is absent.

I don't know if I am confused or not, or if there is a doubt in my mind or not. When you read a manuscript which

contains some sanskrit words you read the wrong thing but you don't know it is wrong. It is correct so far as you are concerned, because you read your own meaning into it. So later when somebody else points out that this is wrong, you say, "Oh, I thought it was right." And he comes and tells you, "When you are in doubt, come and ask me". You don't come and ask him at all. Why? Because there is no doubt! There was no doubt in your mind concerning this because you thought that this was the right thing. So confusion and doubt are very difficult for one to discover in oneself but craving can be discovered. If there is craving in your heart, you can definitely know that this is craving, and therefore enlightenment is far away.

To be able to see the world as it is, is enlightenment. The world here means me too. This body, this mind, and if there is a soul, or whatever it is, are also part of the world, whatever that is. That is, I am not outside of this world, this universe. By world we don't mean this earth, but the whole of creation.

It is when you confuse the fragment for the totality, when you fall into the error of regarding the fragmentary personality as the whole world that error arises. How to get rid of this or how to deal with this? Whether it can be got rid of, what is got rid of when you see the mirage as a mirage, we don't know. The mirage is still there; with wide open eyes, with an intelligent, enlightened mind, you see the mirage as it is. Now it is as it is, not as water. But then what is the big joke? It was never water. What have you achieved? Nothing! So one doesn't know how to express it in proper language because language was not intended to describe this phenomenon.

To deal with this, certain herbs, certain mantras, certain forms of penance and austerity were probably used. In addition to this, two other factors are mentioned, jati and samadhi. Jati is birth. That is, some people are enlightened or are close to enlightenment at birth. One example with which we are all familiar is Ramana Maharshi. Right in his childhood he had some experience. From then on it was one long unending uninterrupted self-realisation.

The other is samadhi. Samadhi has been described in great detail in the third section where we are introduced to the three-fold inner discipline, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. Please remember we are dealing with the problem of fragmentation, narrowness of mind, narrowness of vision, narrowness of heart. But,

III.1. desa bandhas cittasya dhāraṇā

(When the attention of the mind-stuff is directed in a single stream to a chosen field, without being dissipated and thus distracted - that is concentration.)

Dharana or concentration is described as narrowness, it is a tying of the mind to a limited field. The dhyana is getting into it, becoming saturated with it, ensuring that only one thought, one concept or just this I feeling prevails in that small area. Then you are able to look at it with tremendously fierce focussing. In samadhi this narrowness, this limitation, is suddenly destroyed.

Why all this game? When you are trying to deal with fragmentation why create another which this technique appears to do? Normally the mind or consciousness or awareness is scattered everywhere. As you are sitting here you can mentally fly to India, to America, to heaven, hell, everywhere. The focal point is still there, "I" is still there and "I" is projecting from here onto the whole world, heaven and hell and all that. All these rays have to be gathered, focussed on this one ego-sense, burst that ego-sense and once again spread out to the whole universe. Why? You hold an empty glass, look into it, there is space. It's empty, that means there is empty space inside. Fill it up with water. Now the glass is filled with water. What happened to the space that was there before? It is still there. That is, the water has filled the glass without disturbing the space that was there. So you can say now that in that glass there is water and there is also space. In exactly the same way consciousness is cosmic and ignorance is cosmic. Ignorance is as wide as awareness itself. Ignorance and enlightenment are coextensive. Even so is the comparison between deep sleep and samadhi. In deep sleep there is complete nonawareness and in samadhi there is complete

awareness.

So, in order to deal with this darkness of ignorance which has created this ego-sense you gather all the rays of the mind, all the rays of awareness, focus them powerfully on this ego-sense, and let only that awareness of the ego-sense prevail. After having gathered all this, focus the rays of the mind on that small area, let that alone prevail. Then there is awareness of this ego-sense, that is dhyana. In one moment the illusion is gone. So the same thing emerges again. It is no longer ahamkara, but ahambhavana, ahamspurana, in the words of Ramana Maharshi. There is just this vibration, I am, I am, I am. But this I am is not operating now in the shadow of ignorance. That "thing" is still seen but not as water. And this "I am" looks around, and finds that the world is alright. The whole universe is still there and even the "I am" is there but completely changed.

Acquire this eye of wisdom which is what we are describing now, then you will see the whole world as God - not till then. The I is still there, but what a change. So this is the whole samadhi pattern. The samadhi appears to be some kind of a practice. This can also lead to perfection or the various siddhis described in the third chapter. If this concentration is applied to various phenomena you can also acquire complete knowledge of those phenomena. And after describing all this in the previous chapter the author also says please don't get involved, then you'll lose your direction. These themselves can become distractions.

The samadhi itself can lead to perfection. And if it does not lead to perfection now, which means in this life span, what happens? That is suggested in the next sutra:

IV. 2. jaty antara parinamah prakrtya 'purat

(However, congenital endowments are not accidental, as the incidence of birth is determined by the character or quality with which one's whole being is saturated.)

When this body is dropped, that which dwells in it continues to exist. That takes on another birth as it were, because the ignorance is not completely gone. We are still practising, struggling, we have not reached perfection in this samadhi.

To get back to the analogy of the mirage, you drove past that place yesterday and you come back and look at it this morning. You think: "Heh, it looks like water, no it's a mirage." There is doubt: "It looks like water but who knows, there might have been a little bit of rain yesterday. Though it looks like a mirage as it looked yesterday and though I checked on it and discovered that there was no water yesterday, how can I be sure that last night there was no rain and that today there is really a little bit of water there?"

You have a vague idea of what the truth is. It's still more or less an idea. Probably in one of those meditational experiences you have a glimpse of the truth. But when you open your eyes you have a doubt. "It was wonderful but how can I still see a bad man as also the embodiment of God?" We used to read in Ramakrishna's teachings about some mad insane looking sage instructing somebody whom Ramakrishna had sent, "If you are able to treat the gutter water with the same respect as you treat Ganges water, then you know that you are enlightened." That realisation is still not there; I see that this is water and that is water but then this is sewage, filth, that is Ganges. I can understand intellectually that if the sewage flows into the Ganges, a little later it becomes Ganges. But then I still see the difference.

At that point if the body drops, your nature is saturated to some extent and the next birth takes on from there. It is only in the case of people like Ramana Maharshi that you find right from childhood, right from birth as it were, that they have a spiritual inclination, a spiritual tendency. They inevitably walk the spiritual path so that it looks as though perfection is very close to them. Then the practice starts again, samadhi starts again so that it is a continuous ongoing process, abhyasa. The practice of yoga, Raja Yoga, this samadhi, is an ongoing process, ending only in enlightenment. This samadhi though it is interrupted by all sorts of things is really not affected by what happens with the body or to the body in this birth or in the next birth, because the truth is there always.

nimittaṁ aprayojakaṁ prakṛtīnāṁ

varaṇa bhedas tu tataḥ kṣetrikavat IV.3.

(To be so saturated does not involve acquiring or adding some new quality; for the transmutation of one's nature is not effected by the introduction of a new cause but by the removal of that which obstructs the realisation of that nature. The new practice is a catalyst and is otherwise useless: and people of different natures make different choices. As in agriculture: there is fertility in the seed and the soil, and effort is directed at the removal of the weeds and the pests.)

All your struggle and your sadhana, is merely nimittaṁ, an instrumental cause, not a direct cause; it is not as though that without it the truth will disappear, the self will become unreal. Don't think that all the sadhana that you are doing is of great importance. If you do think so you are stuck in that sadhana. Why is this sutra introduced here? In order that you may not cling to the ladder, to the rungs of the ladder instead of ascending it, in order that you may not fall in love with the boat and forget to cross the river. Don't think that this is going to bring you enlightenment, enlightenment is already there. And in accordance with the assets and liabilities that you have brought forward from a previous birth, previous life span, you choose your path. There seem to be all sorts of distinctions and differences. One person does something, a second does something else and a third does yet something else, all of them proceeding in the same direction of enlightenment, self-realisation.

All of this is of no consequence whatsoever, really and truly, though they are necessary. Here we are caught. You cannot attain enlightenment without these,yet they do not lead you to enlightenment. You hold in front of you a beautiful mirror which is covered with an inch thick dust which has settled there for years. You want to look into the mirror. You can't.Nothing is seen. You take a piece of cloth and wipe it. You see your beautiful face. You realise that it was not wiping that created the reflection; the capacity to reflect is there in the mirror, not within the cloth with which you wiped

it. But if you had not wiped it, you could not have seen it. If you think that because you wiped it, you are able to see, come on, wipe this carpet with the same cloth, you'll see nothing. Why is it so? The cloth is not a reflector. It is only the mirror that can reflect your face. But that mirror, even though it has the capacity to reflect your face, is not able to do so because of the dust. That is what is called nimittam. Wiping is only incidental to it.

We sit here and meditate, we chant, we study and do all sorts of things. These are not what are going to bring about self-realisation but without these, no self-realisation is possible. I must give them their due importance without exaggerating and making them the goal, the vital essence. When you see that and when you see that each person will choose a path that is in conformity with the assets and liabilities brought forward, you develop a tremendous understanding. You don't go about hitting people on their heads, "This is not right, that is not right, you must do this, you must do that". You leave them alone. They're all going towards the same destination.

What does the practice of yoga do. It is like a gardener who puts forth tremendous effort in order to cultivate and make a plant grow but whatever he does is merely an effort to remove the obstruction. The soil contains fertility, the seed contains the tree, the plant. He brings these two together and when the plant is about to germinate he probably removes some weeds, indirectly helps the plant to grow. He cannot grow the plant. He cannot produce the plant. The plant is in the seed already. He has no ability to germinate, only the earth has that ability. All that the gardener does is to bring about the right conditions in which what already exists is realised.

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III

This fourth section of the yoga sutras started with a statement that siddhi, perfection or psychic powers, whichever

way you wish to look at it, is born of some factors - birth, drugs, mantras, austerities, penance, and samadhi. Then there is a declaration which we dealt with yesterday that all these are incidentals, useless.

There are two ways of looking at it. Nimittam is an instrument. When you write a letter with your pen, the pen is your instrument, an instrument in your hands. If someone asks you, did the pen write the letter, you say, "Of course, I wrote the letter." Could you have written a letter without a writing instrument? No. There again is a very puzzling, paradoxical situation. Without it you cannot and without you it cannot. I am the writer of the letter, not the pen. So from one point of view the pen is useless for writing a letter. I have to be there. I must pick up that pen and write the letter. The pen could lie for eternity on the table and it would not write the letter. And I could struggle for eternity and not be able to write the letter till I pick up a pen, a writing instrument. So, both these extreme views must be avoided by the intelligence.

If you grasp it clearly it contains a fairly disturbing message. It's quite possible that you were born a saint, but that will evaporate if something is not done to further it. Just because you were born a saint or at least you think so, you are not absolved from further effort. Of course, if it is really and truly true that you were born a yogi, naturally you would engage yourself further in the yogic path, as long as there is life in the body. What is it that makes you say, 'Oh, alright, I performed a few miracles even when I was a little boy. I'm up there, I'm on top." You're not on top. That was only an instrument's game, and the moment you put the instrument down on the table, the letter ceases to be written. In the same way the mantras and even the drugs are all instruments. People have been discussing this problem ad infinitum because a great man called Aldous Huxley in a book entitled Doors of Perception has mentioned a drug experience as having been "up there", "out there". Is that true? Can the drug itself give me the experience? There I must bring in this argument of the third sutra in this fourth section. It's one of the aids perhaps and it has to be used intelligently; if you pick up a

pen and start rubbing it with its bottom, no letter could be written.

While you are using an instrument you must know how to use it. There must be full understanding of the advantages, the disadvantages, the limitations and the ability. If that is not there, then I don't know the result. Some people may question Aldous Huxley's declaration that LSD is of great use in attaining heightened states of consciousness, I don't know first hand. I have never experienced any of these. But vaguely in my own mind I can compare the effect of these drugs to a cup of coffee for instance. Even in the ashram in Rishikesh we used to do that. I want to get up and meditate in the morning or late at night and the mind is dull due to various causes and circumstances. It is dull, not fatigued; if it is fatigued, all that you do is to go to sleep. Take a cup of coffee and sit and meditate, that's alright. The coffee drives the drowsiness away and you sit and meditate. If you don't want to do that, do some sirsasana or vigorous bastrika pranayama. Coffee is a drug, shouting kirtan is a mantra, and some kind of sirsasana, or bastrika pranayama is tapas. All these things are aids, that's all.

But after having done all this, what you are going to do with the effect only you know. There was a swami in Calcutta who used to get up regularly at 4 o'clock and he was a very delightful man, a very nice man. He said that that was the best period of the day to write difficult letters to clients. He was in big business. He said that on Fridays and Saturdays, brahmamuhurtam, when all these saints and sages emphasise that we should sit and meditate, was the best period for him to sit and calculate what to do about the horse racing on Saturday. He chose the right horse during that period. You get up at 4 o'clock, have a cup of coffee, then you are wide awake. But the coffee and I guess in a similar fashion LSD, or whatever it is, is not going to put you into meditation.

Perfection is not brought about by these, nor is perfection possible without some kind of effort and practice. Here you are caught. Perfection is not the end result of any process nor is it independent of any of these. You go on doing this like the gardener removing the weeds and watering the

garden, and doing all sorts of other forms of activity. But the growth of the plant is not dependent upon whatever he does. He is not bringing about the growth of the plant. The doctor might treat this body with some medicines and vitamins and so on, but if the life has decided to leave, they won't work. Both these are necessary, not in a causal relationship, but in some other relationship - a relationship of the essential and the incidental, the essential being the inner awakening, perfection which is already there and the incidental being the aids, the help.

Perfection is not brought about, it is not something that is made anew, something that is created, it is not something which is the end result. If something comes into being now it has to cease, a little later. But this perfection or enlightenment is a fact of existence, it is not something which you and I are creating. It is like the reflection in the mirror, it exists at all times. Because of the dust covering you are unable to see it: wipe it and you can see a reflection in the mirror.

Now, why is it that all this effort that we have put into our meditation and our spiritual practice is considered to be "aprayojakam", useless, except as an aid?

IV.4. nirmāṇa cittāny asmitā mātrāt

(Any attempt to introduce a new transforming influence can only erect one more barrier - as such a construction of the mind-stuff (as the new influence or image is) is obviously and only a product of the ego-sense.)

Whatever you put together with the help of your mind is related to your own ego. Please remember that earlier on Patanjali had said:

I.39. yathā 'bhimata dhyānād vā

(Or, the distractions can be overcome by adopting any contemplative technique, using any object of meditation, one likes most, for that which one likes most holds one's attention, and the technique one likes most makes contemplation easy - provided, of course, that neither the object nor the technique itself involves or invites distraction.)

You can meditate in whatever method you like, upon God, upon a light - you use that method and meditate. Here he says you can do all that, but please remember that all that is your own creation. Whatever you have put together, constructed with the help of your mental activity is very nice, a beautiful dream. If you want to go on dreaming, please do , but don't call it perfection or enlightenment.

In that there is still a division, the seer and the seen, the meditator and the object of meditation, the subject and the object. As long as this division is there, you are sure that ignorance is there, and its consequent ego-sense also is there. Perfection is there, it has not vacated its omnipresent throne. You have covered the whole thing with your own mental activity and concepts; you are playing with these creatures of your own mind. All these are related to the self, ego. That's why in one of Ramana Maharshi's talks he says enquiry into the self alone is the right path. Meditation he said is based on the ego, it's the ego that does the meditation. But having put your foot on this rung called meditation, you can go further.

Patanjali's meditation is intended merely as an exercise to acquire the power of concentration, the power of entering into oneself. Once you go through with it, you are outside of it. That is the vichara method. The other forms of meditation are more or less concentration. Any effort that is put into this meditation practice is merely to ensure that there is concentration of attention. With that you are able to enter into it and that is vichara (or vicara). That is moving very efficiently - "car" is "to move", "vi" is "very efficiently". (It is very interesting if you write vichar in transliteration - v - i - c - a - r - a. The root is "car", to move and car moves.) Only the pronunciation is different. So first you learn to concentrate the mind, focus the mind upon something which is chosen but all the while you remember that this is merely an instrument, an incidental exercise. One must go through this and come out of the other side, the other side of ignorance, where there is enlightenment. If that is not remembered, one gets hooked onto a thing called meditation which is nothing but mental activity and therefore ego-based mental activity, ego-related experiences. You can have all

sorts of experiences but all these are ego-related.

You might think: "Well, this man is talking about hallucinations and so on - we are not like that, we are really meditating upon God. You know we see Brahma seated in the lotus and somebody with two horns and four arms."

IV.5. pravṛtti bhede prayojakaṁ cittaṁ ekam anekeṣāṁ

(However many such images one may build within oneself, all these are projected by a single ego-sense in the mind-stuff, though the operations of the diverse successive images may vary, giving the false feeling of methodical and rapid spiritual progress.)

The citta, the mind is only one, but on account of prayojakam, the propulsion, the diversity in pravṛtti, or one's nature, one's practice, the same thing appears to be a different experience in different people. She sits there and meditates and suddenly she sees Virgin Mary or Jesus Christ. Wonderful, that's nice; there's no harm in it. Someone else sees Krishna dancing around. That's marvellous. The same citta plays different tricks in different people.

Whatever be your thought, whether it is virtuous or vicious, it's all the play of the mind. One kind of mental activity gives you inner happiness or peace of mind and so they say this is better. Some good thoughts are constructive and therefore they encourage it. They compel you to promote the welfare of society. If you are thinking positively, thinking of the good of others, you would surely do something about it so those good thoughts are exalted. If you go on entertaining vicious thoughts, it is inevitable that those vicious thoughts must be translated into vicious actions, destructive of society and so they say it's a bad thing. What is the difference between good and evil here? There is only one simple difference. The spelling. One is g - o - o - d, the other is e - v - i - l. That is from the point of view of a seeker who wants to reach perfection. Without totally abandoning evil thoughts, evil thinking, which is a necessary preliminary step, you are getting nowhere. You have not even put your foot on the first rung of the ladder of yoga. But this is said in order to caution you against resting on the fifth rung of the ladder.

I have got there, all my evil thinking has been abandoned, now I think God thoughts only - not only good thoughts. But thoughts are thoughts, whether they are God thoughts or good thoughts or evil thoughts.

Because you are of a certain nature, your thoughts share that nature. The other man being a drunkard and debauch and vicious scoundrel, all his thoughts are evil. This man is honestly and faithfully manifesting his nature, and the other man being a swami, a holy man, is honestly and faithfully manifesting his nature. What is the difference? Fire is hot, ice is cold. You don't expect fire to be cool. It is the nature of fire to be hot, warm. It is the nature of ice to be cold. It is the nature of that man to behave in that way. It is the nature of this man to behave in this way. What do we, as students of yoga who have learned to abandon evil even right from the early yoga practice learn from this? We learn not to consider ourselves very superior and not to condemn others. That man is merely manifesting his own nature, his proper nature. I should not hold him responsible for that. Because I have been walking this path not only in this birth, but maybe in several previous births, it is natural for me not to think those evil thoughts. So there is no glory here. Because of different inner equipment, different predispositon, different natures, if one may call it so, each one thinks differently, each one has different experiences but the mind is the same.

'IV.6. tatra dhyānajam anāsayam

(Hence, the no-image that is born of meditation is the best - because it does not create a receptable for itself, entrench itself as a real image, and colour the mind.)

So instead of hanging on to these experiences, produced by the mind, put together by the mind, created by the mind, the yogi bent on reaching perfection, engages himself in this enquiry. The enquiry itself becomes jnana. And knowing that all constructions are bound to be destroyed - even psychological constructions, which are called doctrines, dogmas, faith, belief - the yogi steers very clear of all those things. He sees a brilliant vision. He recognises this is one kind of construction. It may arise in him. Very good, but this is a

kind of construction. This is not going to last. It will be destroyed. All that is put together by the mind, constructed by the mind must eventually be destroyed. So without clinging to it, without hanging on to it, without resting in it, or on it, the yogi's intelligence moves on.

When the mind comes to a rest saying this is the truth, that is not the truth, there the mind is creating the concept that this is the truth and it is going to rest there. It says: "I have attained enlightenment". It is stupid nonsense. Your meditation should have no support at all. When the mind feels like resting somewhere, no,no, keep going, this is not the goal. The mind is still functioning, still building an image called perfection or enlightenment, or God or the self. The understanding of this simple truth enables you to go on. You become aware of those experiences but go on. You become aware of even greater experiences, you go on. You become aware of heightened states of consciousness, but you go on. You don't want heights. Why not depths?

IV**

IV

Meditation is meditation only if it leads to the self, but as the self is not an object, one cannot determine that "This is it". When there is such determination, there is an image, whatever it be. Whatever be the determination of the self that "This is it", there is an image, and you are trapped there.

(IV.4. -- Please see page 47)

Whatever be the concept of self that you may have, it is all put together by the mind and the ego, which is the mind.

As a matter of fact, it is because yoga deals with this fundamental problem that it is called Raja Yoga, the royal road. In life itself, everything that happens to us and everything that we do is made possible and is made inevitable because of this image formation. It is because I have a certain image of myself that I crave for something. If I don't have an image of myself as a man, there is no craving for companionship of a

woman. If there is no image in oneself of being a woman there is no craving for a child. It is of these images that cravings and aspirations are born.

For instance, it is because I have an image of myself as a weak person that I conceive of God as a strong personality. God is omnipotent. Why? Because I am impotent. That is the image I have in my mind. I am unable to achieve what I desire to achieve, and therefore I feel that I am weak. So having built the image of weakness of the self I build another image called omnipotence of God and I worship God. I am not saying that this worship is good or bad, but it is good to understand it without any prejudice whatsoever.

My mind is constantly restless. This restlessness is also an image that is formed in me. How do I know that the mind is restless? Because I think it is restless. Because I have no peace of mind I form an image that I am restless, and it is that image that clammers for, aspires for a God who is all peace. I have an image of what a peaceful mind should be. Since it is not the self, i.e. I cannot look at the being that I am, I think a completely peaceful mind must be "like this". That is already an image. And in comparison to that image, I am restless.

In my self I am alright. If I continue to live in the village in which I was born I'm perfectly educated. I may not be able to read and write English, but that is not important. In my self I would have been contented. So that restlessness, lack of peace of mind, is already an image put together in the mind by my comparison with somebody else. If that is not there there is no discontent at all. If there is no comparison there is no discontent.

But comparisons are unavoidable. You see a man sitting peacefully, but you don't even know what he is doing within himself. You look at him and say: "If only I could sit quietly like that." You have built an image in your mind of what a peaceful state is or must be. That is what creates restlessness. You become aware of restlessness and so you say: "Oh my God, I am restless, I have no peace of mind." And you create an image of God that is absolute peace. Or I see someone

smiling all the time, and since I am not able to do this I think that I must be unhappy, and looking at him I have an image of unhappiness within myself. Now the chain reaction continues again. Because of my self image of an unhappy person, I have another image of God who is bliss. I'm still not saying that all this (that God is Peace, Bliss etc.) is not true. It may all be true. But as images they are deadly. Clinging to one of these images is as good or as bad as clinging to some other image.

There may be other points of view. We are told to think positively. "As you think so you become." For instance take the phrase: "If you constantly meditate upon God with great and intense faith and feel that God is blissful, you will also become blissful." Every word of that phrase is important. The person who laid down this formula is unbeatable. You can do this for ten years and then go back and say, "Look it hasn't happened to me." You will be asked, "Did you meditate constantly?" "No." You go back and for another ten years think of God as bliss. But when you return you will be told, "I said remember God constantly with great and intense faith. Your intensity of faith is useless." You are foiled again. Each time you forgot to follow one of the important rules in the sentence.

So it is quite possible that all these formulas and doctrines may have a grain of truth in them, but we are pursuing a different path. Why does the mind build an image at all? The mind builds an image of God to suit its own image of itself, and that is the basic problem throughout our life. Even your day to day affairs are all guided by this. I have an image of myself and I want to seek something which will complement it, redress it. If that image is one of unhappiness I want something to redress it. If the image is one of incompleteness I want to complete that.

Instead of beating about the bush, Patanjali says, "Why don't you look within and see where the image is born." This looking within is meditation. Then suddenly you discover that in meditation you are building another image. Perhaps that is the only time when the fact that there is a self image becomes clear, otherwise it is not clear. For instance I told you a

few minutes ago that even the feeling that I am a man, is an image. But now it looks absurd. Do you mean to say I am not a man, I am a dog? I am not aware that this business of being a man is also an image that is formed in the mind, because I have got reconciled to it. What we call a fact in our waking state is nothing but an image put together by the foolish ignorant mind,and repeatedly affirmed each day. That is how it becomes a reality.

Substituting one image for another image is not going to help us either, because the image is still an image. Changing the hair style doesn't make a woman a man or a man a woman. Putting on a different kind of dress doesn't change anything. A charming girl I knew in Canada enjoyed carrying heavy loads If a young man suggested that he could help her she would protest, "You are treating me as a girl. I don't like being treated as a girl." If I am carrying a heavy load and the same young man offered to help me, I would not feel he was treating me as a girl. Why shouldn't one person help another? Why do you protest? Because you have an image in yourself that you are a girl, and you are creating another image, a unisex image, and hoping that it will take over the first one. It doesn't happen that way. It only leads to a certain amount of confusion. So that the person who thinks that he is unhappy or has no peace of mind, and that God is peace and bliss, may end up in some kind of confusion like the girl.

Instead, Raja Yoga suggests, "Look within and try to see where the image is made." Why am I craving for something, why is there craving for comfort or for companionship? Why is there this ambition? Why do I desire anything at all? It is because there is the thought that I lack something. How do I know? What is the origin of that thought? I may have an image in my mind of what a perfect swami should be. First this image arises, and then that image looks at whatever there is and suddenly feels inadequate. "I am not like the image that I have of what a swami should be." In relation to that there arises frustration, disquiet, despair and restlessness, and then to balance all this I bring in hope, positive thinking, God and an afterlife. I feel, "Never mind, if I am miserable I'll go to heaven and enjoy it."

So why not look at this phenomenon of image building itself. When you learn to look at it you are meditating, whether you are sitting quietly with closed eyes, or running around with open eyes, you are meditating. Incidentally that was Buddha's realisation too. On the day of enlightenment he is reported to have said, "You builder of images, you will not build any more images;neither an image of enlightenment nor an image of liberation or salvation." Even an image of moksha or liberation is a trap. Can I free myself completely and totally from all self images?

(IV.6. -- please see page 50.)

There should be meditation, there should be observation without an observer, there should be meditation without a goal of meditation. There is a constant seeking without an object to be sought. There is love without an object to love or to be loved. That is what Raja Yoga is all about.

IV.7. karmā 'suklā 'kṛṣnam yoginas trividham itareṣām

(The yogis' actions, springing from such no-image are therefore neither pure nor impure whereas in the case of others, actions are of three classes, kinds or types - viz., pure, impure and mixed.)

In the case of such a yogi, whatever action takes place in his life, such actions appear to be done by him in the eyes of the observer. But as far as he is concerned those actions, although they take place, are colourless and untainted. I'm deliberately avoiding the use of the word 'pure'. It is better to phrase it negatively, and say untainted and without any colour.

(IV.7. -- please see above.)

They are neither white nor black because there is no self image and therefore there is no aspiration, no craving, no desire. There is no goal other than life itself, truth itself, consciousness itself. When the self image of the yogi has been destroyed, or there is no image, from where do these actions flow? In our case the actions flow from the image that we have of ourselves, and they are naturally directed towards a goal, towards an achievement. The achievement is the

complement to what we are. I need something, I lack something, there is something wanting in me, and I want to fulfil that want, that craving, and therefore I strive. When these things are not there, there is no ego motivation, no image motivation.

From where do actions arise and what is their destination? That is totally unpredictable. They arise in whatever it is that gave rise to the whole universe. The yogi's actions arise where the creation of the universe took place. Call it God if you wish. So only he, in the eyes of others, is a channel for divine will. But he does not go around saying "I am performing the will of God," for then there is an image. He doesn't say that he is an instrument in the hands of God. He might use the formula but he doesn't mean it, because then there is an image. He might or might not use the word "I". There are some great yogis who refuse to use the word "I" but that doesn't mean that they were enlightened.

So the yogi is one in whom there is no self image. But he is also alive, he is also functioning here in the eyes of others. So from where do his actions arise? In that power, in that consciousness, in that energy that gave rise to this whole universe. His actions are governed by the divine will. They are totally uncoloured by likes and dislikes. There is no image to form a relationship with others, and uncoloured by likes and dislikes, there is therefore neither a definition of goodness nor a definition of condemnation as evil. You may look at him and say "Look what a vicious thing he has done or what a great thing he has done," but so far as he is concerned these things don't exist. Good and evil do not exist in his case, and therefore he does not incur karma. In our case our karmas are not only black and white but also a lot in between. Some actions are diabolical, some are very divine, some are human, some are half animal.

IV.8. tatas tad vipākā 'nuguṇānāṁ
evā 'bhivyakttir vāsanānāṁ

(The images that are built in the mind and the actions that flow from them colour the mind creating tendencies which manifest when conditions are favourable.)

When these actions arise in the self image, they confirm that image. This is probably a reply to some people who say, "Work it out". You cannot work this image formation out because every time the image is allowed to act in that manner in which it is bound to act, the image is being confirmed, and what originally was merely imagination, becomes almost real. What was a vague curiosity in the beginning, becomes an action, and then becomes confirmed as a tendency.

Take for instance smoking or drinking coffee. You might smoke just out of curiosity, then an image is formed, that "All important people smoke". This image then craves for a cigarette, which then makes me feel happy or elated. By starting as a curiosity and then being indulged in repeatedly, it becomes a tendency. How do you avoid this tendency being formed? Not by fighting it. You can change a tendency from one to the other, slightly modify it. If you are ashamed of your own drinking habits, you will organise a cocktail party! This tendency cannot be overcome either by satisfying it or by suppressing it.

It is not possible to deal with it unless the whole dynamics of action and reaction is understood. I'm compelled to do this because there is something which says I need it. Why did that something say that this is desirable? Because it had a desire. Because there was a desire the object became desirable. It is not the other way around. A thing is not desirable unless I desire it. There is nothing in the world which everyone desires. (I'm talking about an object, not abstract qualities) It only becomes desirable because I desire it, and I desire it because there is something lacking in me, or there is an awareness, a consciousness, a feeling that I lack something. That is the image. Since this self image is dented it is looking for a fulfilling complement. If you still cling to the idea that the self image is dented, imperfect, you try to repair it, make it whole, and that leads to other complications.

The next question is, why is there this image at all? Who builds these images, and what is the content and character of these images? This is called vicara. Since it is a quest without a goal, and since meditation is an observation without

creating the image of an observer, it has nothing whatsoever to hang on to. People get frightened of this. Perhaps for a few minutes you feel that you are falling into nothing. Then you realise that if you are dropping into nothing there is no harm, there is no "fall". If I fall from here into the ravine I might hit a rock, but if I fall into nothing, that's marvellous. So although there may be an initial fear, a frightening experience, that passes away.

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V

This same self image that we have, creates an image in the other, creates an image called the other. It is not as though the other exists and I create an image of it. It is the self image that creates the other. If the self image is not there, the other is not there. And even in the absence of the other, the self image creates what is called the other. You may say, "I see you. You are something which is existent. Since I am also something that is existent, I see you as the other. Later I create an image of you as a friend, an enemy, a rival etc."

But that is not necessary. For instance in dreams there is nothing called the other. In a dream a self image is created. The dream creates within me another thing called me, experienced as the me during the period of the dream. And that dream image creates another one within itself. It is the self image that creates the other. If that self image is not there, the other is not there. In the place of both of these there is oneness, but that is beside the point.

So it is this self image that creates the other and then establishes a so-called relationship. All actions originate in this funny fictitious relationship. This fact is seen in meditation. Because of the recurrent arising of this phenomenon of the self image and the other image in meditation, one becomes aware of one's tendencies. A tendency is a groove, and it is formed by this chain reaction. I don't know if we dream the same dream again and again, but in this thing called the waking

state we tend to cut the same groove again and again. I am looking for the same phenomenon, because in so far as the waking state experience is concerned, the self image is dug in, confirmed - "I am Swami so and so, I am a man etc." By repeated confirmation, this is taken as a fact. Even one's own defects and deficiencies are dug in, and since they are rooted, the factors that compose the self image are also rooted.

You also project the self image onto what is called the other in the same fashion. A tendency is formed, the same actions are repeated, the same experiences are experienced, but not exactly repeated. It gives me pleasure to meet a friend. We have not met each other for 10 years and suddenly I meet you and I'm thrilled. The next time I meet you there is not the same thrill, but I've overlooked that fact. Because of this tendency of regarding you as my friend I keep on thinking that I am delighted to meet you. I am not delighted to meet you to the same degree. But the tendency is there, the groove has been cut and I keep on regarding you as my friend until something shocks me out of that complacency and awakens me to the reality that you are neither my friend nor my enemy. You are you and I am I. So when this action is repeatedly performed by the self image, it is coloured by the self image and becomes black, white and grey. Unless the actions arise from a no image consciousness, the actions themselves are coloured in various ways. It is the self image that projects this coloured action towards an assumed relationship and when this bears fruit it becomes a tendency. The fruition of action is tendency.

Students of yoga are really not very worried about the action-reaction syndrome. For instance, I hit you, either in this birth or in a previous life-time, and you give it back to me with a bit of compound interest. That is not a serious thing so far as my present life is concerned. If I can understand the dynamics of this action-reaction, then I take care to see that I do not react afresh, if for some reason known or unknown, you come and hit me. And if I've understood the dynamics of karma, action and reaction, I say, "Alright, I must have given him something earlier on in this life or in an earlier life. Thank you very much for repaying the debt you

owe me." It comes to an end.

But what does not come to an end is the fruition of past action, coloured action, action based on the self image which has matured into a tendency. This wretched thing keeps on repeating itself, inspite of myself and unbeknown to myself. The tendency takes me unawares. When the condition is ripe it arises and manifests itself. If you are really and truly aware of this chain reaction you are able to cut it and say no. You are able to see that this is not something natural, this is not an action that arises from the no image state, this is not natural action, life action. You are able to see that this is something which arises because of a tendency formed by previous actions, committed in a state of ignorance. When you are aware of this it does not arise, it just bubbles within and doesn't really become an action.

But when you are unawares and the circumstances are favourable, you are taken for a ride. These tendencies are called vasanas. Vasana is a mental conditioning and in common language vasana also refers to aromas, scents, smell. If you handle garlic for instance, it continues to smell on your hands for a long time after you've washed them. You take the usual steps to eradicate the smell by washing, or perhaps even trying to mask it with some other scent and for a little while it seems as if the garlic smell has gone and the perfume has come. But the perfume wears out and the garlic comes again. When the circumstances are favourable, the tendency that is hidden within you comes up again.

That is what the yogi is concerned about. The yogi is not concerned so much about the reaction of the action that is performed by him in the form of good luck, bad luck, happiness, unhappiness, pain, pleasure, but he is seriously concerned with this inner tendency that the action of the self image generates within himself. Because that is what hits you, and that keeps the whole thing going.

IV.9. jāti desa kāla vyavahitānāṁ apy ānantaryaṁ smṛti samskārayor eka rūpatvāt

(The relation between the actions, the tendencies they

create, and the manifestation of these tendencies in behaviour may be vague: especially when the behaviour and its antecedents are separate in time, place, and embodiment - yet the latent impressions (tendencies) and memory are identical in nature.)

It is possible that a tendency does not get a favourable opportunity to spring into action for a long time. You haven't smoked a cigarette for years and you feel you have completely eradicated the habit. That is what you think! The sutra goes so far as to suggest that you may not have smoked a cigarette for a whole life time and you think you have beaten the habit, but you have not. Do you remember having smoked a cigarette about 30 years ago? People often say they remember and boast about it. They say that when they were 15 years old they used to have a cigarette now and then but they haven't smoked for the past 25 years. Is the memory still there? Then the tendency is also there. If you are able to remember then the tendency is still there.

(IV.9. smrti saṁskārayor... -- Please see above and on previous page.)

What you called memory is a tendency, the memory itself is the tendency. There is no difference. The difference is merely verbal, we make a verbal distinction. "I remember that I was a fool but I have completely discarded that foolishness and now I am a wise person." Be careful. As long as you remember that, the devil is still there. The converse is not true. You may say that because you don't remember, it has gone. It has not gone. Another problem has arisen, but the tendency is still there, you have merely forgotten the past experience. If you scratch it, it will come up. When a favourable opportunity presents itself, the memory will arise, and the samskara or the tendency, the scar, will also arise.

Such a dreadful situation exists as long as there is a self image and the self image is born of ignorance. The self image creates the other on account of this ignorance. Since the self image and the action, and the reaction which is the experience, are based upon the tendency, all these things lead to the experience of what is called pleasure and what is called pain.

First there is ignorance and this ignorance gives rise to a self image. The self image creates all sorts of other images, enters into relationships, and the feed-back is experienced as pleasure and pain, happiness and unhappiness. The experience of happiness and unhappiness in this relationship gives rise in its turn to desire, craving, hate and so on The desire may take the form of a hope that the pleasant experiences may be repeated and the unpleasant experiences may go away. It can take the form of a liking for pleasure and a dislike for pain, a liking for happiness and a dislike of unhappiness. All these are born of the self image. The self image creates the other and a relationship is established between the two, the feed-back being pleasure, pain, happiness, unhappiness. When these experiences arise there is hope, fear, frustration.

IV.10. tāsāṁ anāditvaṁ cā 'siṣo nityatvāt

(However, it is difficult to determine their exact operation, and it is futile to analyse them. These memories and these tendencies are beginningless - for hope or desire-to-live is permanent.

All these, including this chain reaction, are beginningless. Don't try to trace them back to their origin in time. In this one has to be very careful. They are beginningless in time, so don't try to trace them to their beginning, to find out when they commenced. That is one remarkable and wasteful pastime we indulge in when we psychoanalyse ourselves. We try to isolate this tendency and trace its origin back to childhood. It is a useless game, because there you are assuming that this tendency has got a specific origin in time.

Ignorance is ageless, self image is ageless. From one point of view one may say that the child is innocent and that all the other bits and pieces of conditioning are infused into the child right from birth. Or, from another point of view, before birth there was a self image which gave rise to this birth. It's another form of self image. The infant is not aware of its own self image for the time being, just as in sleep you are not aware of the self image. It does not mean that the self image has gone. It has not, because it wakes up. It is the self image that wakes you up from sleep and it is the

self image that gives rise to birth, to the conception itself. It is the self image that is floating around looking for a vehicle in which to embody itself. So when we try to analyse the present problem and take it to its origin in time, we are frustrated. Ignorance is beginningless, the self image is beginningless and the relationship that the self image creates is also beginningless. The experience of pain and pleasure is beginningless. And therefore desire, craving,hope are also beginningless.

But there is a beginning in another sense. That is, one is able to understand the origin of this chain reaction which is ignorance, not in time but in truth. One is able to look at this chain reaction, see and understand the links in the chain, and arrive at the origin of this whole scheme.

IV.11. hetu phalā 'srayā 'lambanaiḥ saṃgṛhītatvād

esā 'bhāve tad abhāvaḥ

(Yet, since these tendencies have a cause-and-effect relationship with ignorance (that is, they are the result of ignorance and also the cause of its perpetuation) they disappear when the cause (ignorance of the spiritual truth) is dispelled, and vice versa: they support and promote each other and are bound to each other.)

One depends upon the other. Why does the self image arise? Because of ignorance, because I don't know what I am, because I don't know who I am. Can I roll up this carpet, can I go back on those links not in time but immediately? Can I see the whole pattern immediately? I see that there is constant hope, craving, desire, and I see that that desire arises because of the experience of pleasure and the experience of pain. The desire is for prolonging that pleasure and avoiding this pain.

The experience of pleasure and pain arises on account of the relationship that I have with the other, whether the other is an object, another human being or psychological experience. All these constitute the other. Because there is this contact with the other and some experience arose from that contact , that experience is divided. So what is the cause of experience?

The immediate cause of experience is the relationship. What is the cause of this relationship? The creation of the other, the existence of the 'me'. This self image 'me' creates the other, and the rest of the other things follow. What is the self image? I don't know, and because I don't know who I am or what I am, the whole wretched thing started from there.

This you can become aware of immediately, without waiting for time, without linking it with time, without saying I'll do it the day after tomorrow or without saying that all these arose 25 million years ago. Whereas in time these things are beginningless, in truth they have a beginning and that is the root of the whole thing - ignorance. When the ignorance is dispelled all these are also dispelled. When the ignorance is dispelled, the self image is dispelled, contact is dispelled, and experience, hope, frustration all come to an end. That is liberation.

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VI

In a sense the Yoga Sutras are more practical than any other philosophical text. The Yoga Vasistha, the Bhagavatham, and the Bhagavad Gita all make sense, but usually after listening to the philosophies of these texts you come up with one 'but' - but, look at this world. When Krishna says don't worry about the past or the future, you begin to wonder, "But don't they exist, and must I not take into account something which exists?" One must also realize that perhaps the author of the Yoga Sutras was aware that there was a school of thought which said that the whole world which you see is a total illusion. The past does not really exist, and the future is totally non-existent, except in your own fears and hopes; abandon all these for there is neither past nor future. This is the Yoga Vasistha's doctrine.

Perhaps the master of yoga, Patanjali, was aware of this and so he adds some very interesting sutras:

IV.12. atītā 'nāgataṁ svarūpato 'sty

adhva bhedād dharmāṇāṁ

(But that does not imply that the past (the memory and the tendencies) is false and that the future is abolished (by their disappearance). The past and the future exist in reality, in their own form - because the characteristics and the natural differences of countless beings follow different paths.

The past and the future exist, 'svarūpato' - 'in their own form'. The past exists as past, the future exists as future. When you plant a seed, a tree grows out of that; the tree was in the seed only potentially. In relation to the plant that you see now, the seed was the past and the full-grown tree is the future. In the young child there is the potential adult; the adult has the potential of old age and death. There is the past in reality - in its own form. When you say the past is, it is not as if it is present physically now; but the past is present now as a memory.

By accepting the reality for what it is, Patanjali leads you on to the same result as you find in the Bhagavad Gita or the Yoga Vasistha. He's also going to tell you the same thing, while at the same time accepting existential facts without sweeping them off as though they don't exist. In their own forms they are. Don't think that a tree has dropped from heaven. It has not, it has grown out of a seed. The seed stage has passed and the plant stage has come. This plant will one day grow into a big tree. That which has not yet happened is also there, potentially. This girl, though not yet a mother, is potentially a mother; given the right opportunity and the circumstances she will become a mother. Why is it so? There is the potentiality in her. There are some people who are not even potentially capable of being mothers; those people who have got some problem - barren women for example. The past is not present as it was present when it was present, but the past is present as a memory; you cannot object to that. You cannot sweep it away, you cannot pretend it doesn't exist. It's a very clever and beautiful argument.

The future also exists in the present as a potentiality. How do you know? You see that some of the seeds look alike; some of the seeds even look like cockroach droppings. You don't know which is a seed and which is something else. When

you throw them into the soil, and they start growing, the cockroach droppings don't grow but the other does. Why? The potentiality of germination was in the seed and not in the cockroach dropping. 'anagatam' - 'the future', 'svarupato' - 'in its own form'. This is the trick. Don't look for the tree in the seed. It is not there, but it is potentially present.

After Patanjali has declared that these things exist in the person - the past as memory and the future as potentiality - you might ask, "How do you know that these are true?" The nature of one leads in one direction and the nature of another one leads in another direction. "Is this direction good and that direction bad?" "Leave it alone," he says. "Simply recognise that since these distinctions do exist, they point to the simple truth and fact that the past and the future exist in their own form." It is possible that potentially you are supposed to be a holy man; you'll become a holy man. It's possible that potentially you must become a violent aggressive person; you'll grow into a violent and aggressive person. There's no problem there. If you realize that this is what was potentially there and this is what has become manifest, there is neither glory in it nor a fault in it. Society may applaud you, society may punish you; that has nothing to do with you. The potentiality having manifested, 'I' has nothing to do with it. There was the potentiality of motherhood in you and you have given birth. You have manifested that potential. Full stop, there is nothing more. Can you do that? Then you are liberated. You go out into the garden, plant the seeds and do all sorts of fantastic things and then a cyclone comes and pulls them down, or some vandals come, pick all the fruits and take them away. Why should you be worried? There was the potentiality of action in your arms and that potentiality has been made manifest. What you had to do, what you could potentially do, has been done.

This philosophy, which seems to be more realistic than the Bhagavad Gita, takes us to the same point. The past is there in its own state as memory, and the future is there in its own form as potentiality. One cannot deny the existence of the past and the future, because when one observes nature there is growth. Growth implies change and change implies moving from one state to the other. In that which has grown there are the

growth symptoms and there are the signs of growth. This was a child, this was a young person. You're able to see that. The symptoms of having grown up are seen in the grownup. And the symptoms of the future are there in that person, as potentiality.

How do I know that the future is present as a potential and the past is present as memory? All things do not grow in the same way. As you go on contemplating this statement, meditating upon it, it grows more and more beautiful. "All things do not grow in the same way." When this is truly seen then all your prejudices disappear in an instant. This is how he grows, this is how she grows, this is how this grows. So by observing the different patterns of growth, one realises that there is something called the past and there is something called the future.

IV.13. te vyaktta sūksmā gunātmanah

(These differences are of the quality of the beings, not of the being itself. And, they may be either subtle or obvious.

These inherent distinctions could be apparent, gross, very easily detected and perceived, or they could be subtle. The differences exist only in their qualities; there is a slight distinction here, but not in the essential being. Fundamentally we are all one, there is no problem about that. As living beings we are all one, but as human beings we differ from animals and plants. As plants all are equal, but in certain qualities each plant differs from the other. As human beings we are one, but as 'you' and 'I' there is some difference and some distinction; and these distinctions belong not to our fundamental essence as human beings, but to something else, to the individual. Not your nature, but your quality is different from mine. You are a human being, I am also a human being. There is no difference there, but in our qualities we are slightly different. You have a certain quality, I have a certain other quality. Neither that quality, nor this quality is necessarily good or evil, but in relation to something else it may be considered good, or evil. Your essential nature is not tainted by these qualities.

IV.14. parināmai 'katvād vastu tattvaṁ

(Surely, the material world exists: though it is seen that it constantly undergoes change, there is some substance which thus undergoes change.)

Yet you exist as an individual. Even that is not denied. You and I are very similar at a certain level and very dissimilar at a certain other level; it is not as though you and I are completely one. This is the beauty of the Yoga Sutras in contradistinction to the other Vedantic texts. They say that individualities are nonsense, but Patanjali says, no, you exist as an individual. How do you know? Because you grow into something other than me, something which is not me. The individuality is there, and it is that individuality which continues to undergo change. That individuality blossoms as a teacher or a doctor, and this individuality becomes a psychologist. There your quality flourishes, here the other quality flourishes. As "individuals" you are both the same. Of course you are there as an 'individual', but just as you are an individual, so the other person is also an individual.

So,while accepting what seems to be irrefutable fact, Patanjali turns round and brings us to the same goal as the Bhagavad Gita and the Yoga Vasistha. Accept the truth, but don't blindly extend it to cover whatever you want to cover. Come down. You'll recognise the reality for what it is, but don't go beyond that. Rigorously train and discipline yourself to cut it straight. One individuality goes that way, the other individuality goes this way. Although they are apparently different, fundamentally they are one and the same.

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VII

Even if we observe the fact of change, there must be something in order to undergo that change. It is some substance that undergoes change - never a non substance, or a non existent thing. In order to undergo a change there must be something, which is. The change may be there, but there is a substance which undergoes the change so that one cannot deny the

existence of the object, the existence of the world, or the existence of matter. Shall we regard matter itself as perpetually diverse? It is possible. Yes? This is another point of view. That is, the human is something, the animal is something and the plant is something. These keep on changing.

There is also a school of thought which says that some beings who are called the asuras, are eternally damned, and some beings who are called the gods, are eternally blessed. They keep on being eternally good and eternally evil though there is some change among the good and some change among the evil. There are eternally beautiful things and there are eternally ugly things - good and evil are the basic factors of this dichotomy.

Patanjali does not agree with this theory.

IV.15. vastu sāmye citta bhedāt tayor

vibhakttah panthāh

(The world of matter is entirely neutral and homogeneous. Differences (like good and evil, beauty and ugliness) are perceived because such differences are created by viewpoints oriented to different directions or goals.)

The world outside exists, but it does not come and hit you and say, "I am a good person", or "I am a beautiful person". There seems to be a big difference between the Yoga Vasistha and the Yoga Sutras to begin with; but once you understand, once you scratch the surface, you find the message is the same - "vastu samye". You look at the objects of the world - they do not proclaim anything. The carpet does not even say 'I am a carpet'. Scientifically it is possible to declare that the carpet is definitely different from this table fan; but the carpet does not say, "I am a carpet", and the table fan does not say, "I am a table fan". They are neutral, and silent. When you extend it a little further, no object in the world says "I am good", and definitely no object says "I am bad". Even poison does not proclaim "I am a killer, be careful". A lion lies there as quietly and as beautifully as a deer lies somewhere else. Nature has not written on the

forehead of the lion, "This is a vicious animal, don't go anywhere near". Nature has not written on the forehead of the cow, "This is beautiful, worship it". Both these objects which are real and diverse, one very different from the other, are yet "samya" - neutral.

They are "samya" - they are what they are, "citta bhedat" - but the distinction arises in your mind. In the original form in which the word citta was used, it seems to refer to undivided consciousness. Here this citta is used in the broad sense of 'mind', a mind that has all the conditioning in it, that is polluted - "citta bhedat". Your mind is different from my mind. And therefore the object is seen not only differently but - "vibhakttah panthāh" - from a different point of view.

Now we have two things. First of all there is an external objective distinction; the leaf is different from the carpet. Secondly there is an internal, subjective division. Whereas objectively both carpets are the same, Kashmiri prayer mats, the conditioned mind says or thinks, that this is better than that one, this is more elegant than that one. The subjective distinction is based upon "citta bhedāt", my mind is different from yours.

Why is my mind different from yours? My mind is conditioned in a different way; my background is different, my upbringing is different, and my scale of values is different. The culture in which I have been brought up is different from yours and therefore my culture has conditioned my mind to look upon this as civilisation and that as barbarism. My upbringing, my training, my education, says that this is bad and that is good. A glass of whisky is an insignia of civilisation, and smoking ganja is deadly, terrible. One is accepted socially and the other is not.

So here is a point of view, and this point of view distorts the perception of the object still further. "Then why don't we say that it is the perceiving mind alone that determines the existence of the object?" asks the objector. "Just as one says that this is beautiful, that is ugly, it is possible for one to say that this is a carpet, only because I recognise it as a carpet. If the mind did not recognise that as a carpet, it

would cease to be carpet." This is another extreme argument. In answer to that Patanjali says:

na cai 'ka cittatantraṁ vastu

tad apramāṇakaṁ tadā kiṁ syāt IV.16.

(An object or a substance in this world is not dependent for its existence on one mind. Else, would it not cease to be if that mind does not cognize it?)

The object does not depend upon one mind. Supposing my mind is completely deranged and I become completely mad. Will the carpet cease to be a carpet at that time or not? You can go on taking this to the other absurd extreme. If I become raving mad and I start scratching this and eating it, does it suddenly become food and not carpet? You have seen mad people behaving in strange ways like this. Supposing I go and embrace that tree, does it become a friend and cease to be a tree? Thus I may be raving mad, the mind may become temporarily insane, but the object remains what it is.

There is of course the famous question: "If a tree fell in the Himalayas 200 miles away from all human habitation did it make any sound at all?" Patanjali says "yes". Independent of your viewpoint the object exists, and independent of your hearing ability that which exists, exists. Vasistha might come in and say that that's because the cosmic consciousness recognises it. Here Patanjali says that things exist in themselves whether or not you, the individual, comprehend them. That is, even before the TB virus was seen or detected by the scientists, it already existed, it always existed. Even before the laws of nature were discovered by the scientists, the laws themselves were there as a reality. Nobody could question that.

The existence of the object does not depend upon one mind comprehending the object.

IV.17. tad uparāgā 'pekṣitvāc cittasya

vastu jñātā 'jñātaṁ

(However, a particular object or substance is comprehended or ignored in accordance with whether the mind is or is

not coloured by that object, and is therefore attracted or repelled by that substance. Hence the quality or the description of the substance is dependent on the mind: whereas its existence is independent of it.)

Why do we become aware of some objects and remain ignorant of some other objects. The object exists, our diverse minds exist, and the different points of view also exist. When we say different minds, it only means different points of view. All these innumerable, infinite number of objects also exist in themselves as they are. Depending entirely upon whether you like something or are indifferent to something (it's not so much a dislike as indifference), an object becomes known to you or remains unknown to you. If you like an object it becomes known to you. If you are indifferent to it, it remains unknown. They are not dependent upon your mind but their qualities are dependent upon your perception, and they become known to you when you establish a relationship with them. They remain unknown to you when you do not establish such a relationship, when you remain indifferent.

There are billions of people on earth whom you do not know. Why? They do not matter, "I don't care" - 'uparāgā' - life is not dependent upon them. Their existence is of no consequence to me and therefore I do not know of them. Once their existence, or the existence of these diverse objects, means something to me, once I begin to like them, and depend upon them, then I'll know them. This is a fairly scientific and realistic appraisal of the world and the objects as well as an appraisal of the subjective mind and its modifications, its points of view and its conditioning. Patanjali points out that these two constantly interact one on the other.

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VIII

In the last discussion it looked as though the yogi or the master accepts almost an absolute dichotomy between the object and the perceiving subject: the object, the world being absolutely real, independent of the mind; and the mind being real in itself, accepting, recognising or ignoring as it chooses. I I'm interested in something then the mind recognises its

existence. If I'm not interested in something, the mind does not recognise its existence. Though the object exists independent of the mind, its recognition is dependent upon the mind. It almost appears as though there are two distinct realities.

Having suggested that much, Patanjali goes on to find a synthesis.

IV.18. sadā jñātāś citta vṛttayas tat

prabhoḥ puruṣasyā 'pariṇāmitvāt

(All such changes, colourings and modifications of the mind are always known to the lord of the mind, the indwelling intelligence, since that intelligence is changeless.)

The objects keep on changing, from yesterday, today to tomorrow. There was the seed, then the little sapling with all the potentiality of growth, and then the big tree. That goes on in what is called the external world, and internally also all sorts of changes go on. I expect something, I look at something, I recognise something, I ignore something. What I ignored at one point, I recognise now, what I liked at one point, I dislike now, what I disliked at one point, I like now. It seems to be a totally disorderly situation, and the mind, or the intelligence within the mind, or beyond the mind, cannot function in a state of confusion.

There cannot be orderly, predictable growth, and yet all that we have been discussing so far implies an orderly predictable growth. Even in the earlier chapters, change was discussed as predictable because it follows a certain pattern. There's a certain growth pattern for a tree, and there's a certain growth pattern for a man or a woman. All these potentialities are inherent and the manifestation of the potential demands orderly growth, otherwise there is no sense, no order in creation. We observe that the sun rises everyday in the east and sets in the west. You don't say, "Where is the sun going to set today, northeast or southwest?" There is an order in this universe, in spite of the fact that the world keeps changing and the mind keeps on changing.

Yet all this does not lead to perpetual confusion. Why is it so? "sadā jñātās citta vṛttayaḥ". All these changes or modifications in the citta, in the mind, are forever known to somebody, to something, to some intelligence. These citta vṛttis are your own mental modifications or moods. "citta vṛtti" can also be translated into "the mind's effort at measuring the external world". What do you call a thought or a notion or an idea or a concept? A concept is something with which the mind measures what it sees.

First of all there is an acceptance of the ignorance of the external world. What the world is, I do not know. The mind measures the world in terms of its needs. If you are a botanist, when you look at that tree, you are looking at it for the botanical names, the characteristics, the properties and so on. She is a dietician who is interested in diet, not in botany. When she looks at that she says: "Ah, there are plenty of avocados, that's good, protein". Another is neither a botanist nor a dietician. He has afruit shop and he says, "If there is no cyclone before the fruits ripen on the tree I will make 5,000 rupees". Nobody is seeing the tree for what it is. If you did not have any of these, what would the tree be? That is the reality. That probably one cannot know.

Now, to whom are known all these games that go on in the mind? They are known by "prabhu puruṣa". Puruṣa is defined in some texts as 'one who rests or sleeps in a city'. What is a city? The body is often called in these yoga vedanta texts 'a city with nine gates'. This is a whole city, billions and billions of people are living in it, there are canals, there are trees coming out of the head, there are rocks and mountains, there are rivers running along, a drainage system, all kinds of systems.

What is puruṣa? I don't know. One might say personality; it is not the mask, but something underneath that mask. Persona means mask. The I, the ego is the mask. That which is behind the ego, that intelligence that says I am Swami Venkatesananda, that which wears the mask, <u>that</u> is what rests in this body. That is puruṣa, prabhu. That puruṣa is not deceived by the mind and its thoughts, its measurements, its vṛttis or its moods.

That prabhu, that lord, that puruṣa, that soul, that intelligence within observes and knows all these goings on in the mind. Why? He doesn't change. If he is also changing, then he is also caught. If both of us are dancing, you don't know who I am, I don't know who you are. We don't even look at each other properly; in order to observe properly, at least one of us must stand still. If I am being whirled around, and you are also being whirled around, we never get a correct idea of each other. So here the master says "sadā jñātāś citta vṛttayaḥ". These citta vṛttis, the mental modifications, or thoughts and notions which arise and fall in the citta, are from moment to moment known to the puruṣa, or the spirit, whichever you wish to call it. The intelligence within that shines without undergoing any change, whether you are awake, or asleep, or dreaming, building castles in the air, or thinking that you are thinking, or thinking that you are meditating, whatever is happening to you, that intelligence is absolutely steady.

That prabhu is like water in the ocean. Citta vṛttis being like the waves, are rising and falling all the time. It is not possible for one wave to observe another wave, because by the time it is collapsing the next one is rising. To the water all these waves are known. If you can, imagine that the water has tremendous intelligence, and the water has powers of observation. Water knows from moment to moment how many waves are there, how these waves rise, exist and fall. What water is in relation to the waves in the ocean, this intelligence is in relation to all these modes and moods and thoughts that arise and fall in the mind. While waves rise and fall, water does not undergo any change in the ocean; it may appear to undergo some change, but it stays as water.

IV.19. na tat svābhāsaṁ dṛśyatvāt

(Surely, it cannot be said that the mind is self-luminous and can know itself; it (its changes and modifications) is perceived only by the inner light or the indwelling intelligence.)

It looks as though it is the mind that knows, the mind that thinks, the mind that has knowledge. But the master says that it shines because of an intelligence within, that it is

that intelligence that really knows all this. Why? Does the mind not have power to know? Patanjali says "no". Why not? We suffer under the delusion that the mind is the knower, the thinker - but the mind is not the knower of any knowledge. The mind itself is known by the intelligence within, so that you are able to observe what goes on in the mind. When we are asked to engage ourselves in vichara, self-observation, I start thinking who am I, what am I, what is this thought, how does it arise? I am thinking. As long as I am thinking, the observer is also the mind, or one thought observes another thought, one wave observes another wave. By the time the observer wave arises, the observing wave is collapsing there. So the observer says, "Oh, I looked into myself, all is quiet now". Why? Now instead of the observed wave you have replaced it with an observer wave. You are angry, and you try to observe that thought, but because you have created a new wave in the mind called the observer, the observing wave seems to have collapsed though it is still there. Thinking about thought, observing the mind with the mind itself is of no use: The mind itself is an object of observation, an object of knowledge to this inner intelligence. The mind is like a mirror, it seems to shine, to reflect, but in itself it has no power at all, no power to know. It shines only in the light borrowed from this inner intelligence.

IV.20. ekasamaye co 'bhayā 'navadhāraṇam

(Nor can it be said that the mind is simultaneously both the perceiver and the perceived, the observer and the observed. For, then there would not be rational comprehension.)

Is it possible, asks someone, for this inner intelligence to know the mind and the mind to know the object? Patanjali says it's terribly silly. Who is the observer now? Are there a string of observers? The mind observes the external object, the intelligence observes the mind and the mind can cheat the observer, the intelligence can cheat the mind; there is confusion, chaos. Whereas we see that there is no such chaos in life. Life goes on smoothly, there is order in all this, there is order in the functioning of the intelligence.

This means that there is only one observer, one real

observer and that is the intelligence, the witness. It is that intelligence which is the witness of the mind and of the world, which is not involved in the mental modifications, the change that the mind undergoes, and which does not undergo the change that the world undergoes. It is this intelligence that links the mind with the object. In other words that intelligence is one and indivisible, and like waves arising in the one mass of water called the ocean, the thought arises here, an object arises there.

Thus the world and the mind are not two eternally separate beings but two aspects of one cosmic totality, very much like what goes on in dream. In dream I create myself and also others, and that myself in the dream talks to and plays with the others whom I have created, treats some as enemies, and treats some as friend. That is what is suggested here. There is this inner intelligence which is undivided. At one point it is the mind which thinks, which observes, which sees the objects outside, which measures, because it is ignorant of their real nature. It creates notions about them, concepts about them. All this happens in this undivided inner intelligence, which is uninvolved in the changes that take place in the mind and in the changes that take place in the external world of objects. That is cosmic intelligence and it is what it is, for ever and ever.

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IX

The sutra that we began to study yesterday is remarkably beautiful. If the mind itself is considered the source of knowledge or understanding, if you think that there is nothing other than the mind, then there is no comprehension. If you consider that it is the mind that knows the world and itself, all the modifications and changing moods that go on that you and I are aware of, that it is the mind itself that is aware of all this, then there is no understanding. It is very crisp, terse, and enigmatic. It merely says that if the mind is both the perceiver and the perceived, the observer and the observed, there is no comprehension, but hallucination. If it is possible for one to analyse or to understand the mind with

the mind, it is like water being diluted by water. Nothing happens and yet there is a tremendous illusion of a comprehension. It is also a serious blow to most of the techniques that people adopt - meditation, self-comprehension, self-understanding and science of the mind. Patanjali says it's impossible.

One can see this in one's practice - spiritual or religious - whatever it is. It's the mind which conjures up an image called God, chews it, experiences it, sees it and pats its own back, saying "I have seen God". Much of what goes by the name of religious experience as well as hallucination falls into this category. The mind thinks that it is able to know, that it is able to understand. As a matter of fact even our normal emotional experiences fall into this category. One must understand that what is a painful experience is nothing but what the mind itself regards as a painful experience and then suffers from. Who is it that created it, that named it painful experience, that has converted an experience into a painful experience? The mind.

We discussed in a previous sutra that the world in itself is a neutral object, it is neither good nor bad, pleasant nor unpleasant, and it does not have pleasure or pain inherent in it. It is the moods of the mind that determine whether these experiences or objects are painful or pleasant, happy or unhappy. That applies even to your own psychological experiences. What are they, except what the mind has decided to create within itself? I dislike this experience, I hate it, and it becomes painful from my point of view; since I am involved in it, it hurts me. The mind decides another is a pleasant experience, then it becomes a pleasant experience, otherwise it does not. The same mind says I am experiencing pain or pleasure. It's a vicious circle, and therefore there is no comprehension of the reality. You are experiencing, chewing your own ideas; you are a cannibal. The thing itself is not experienced. One doesn't know what it is.

Since it is the mind that plays its own game within itself, it creates a relationship with an object - I like it, I don't like it. If that relationship was not there, then the object would be cut off, independent of the mind. Then at least you would know, "Oh my God I don't know what this is"; then you

freeze, and it is possible for observation to take place without creating an observer in the mind. The mind alights on the object, just as the mirror is turned towards the wall, and it says, 'I don't know what it is. I can only reflect the object, the real knower is somewhere else.' Can this observation be, without the mind creating an observer; the mind being a mere reflecting medium, something which receives an impression of the image or the object? The object is neutral, neither good nor bad, pleasant or unpleasant. The mind merely reflects all this, reflects the world. There is no observer here. The mind goes on changing its moods, the object goes on changing its shape and there is an observer of the whole lot. That observing intelligence is supreme; it is a mysterious connecting link, a mysterious synthethizer, the substratum for both the object as well as the mind. It is like the sun that shines on the mirror which is reflected on the wall. The light belongs to the sun, the light is that, there is only one light, the mirror is a reflector, not the source of light.

One who does not accept this inner undivided intelligence which is god or atma, might well argue that, "Well what is wrong with that, there may be two minds?

IV.21. cittā 'ntara dṛśye buddhi buddher
atiprasaṅgah smṛti saṁkaraś ca

(If it is assumed that there are two minds - the observer and the observed - this would result in logical absurdity (since both are based on the same intelligence, who designates the distinction?) and also confusion of memory or universal schizophrenia, which is not found to be the case.)

Supposing you say that, "Well, I understand that the external world is reflected in the internal mind. While the mind goes on throwing up all sorts of feelings, thoughts, notions, ideas and hallucinations, there is another superior mind, independent of the other mind, this superior mind goes on playing a game in this world. It sits on top of the medulla oblongata, looks at all this and decides, directs and knows. That is the observing intelligence or monitor."

Patanjali says no. There are not two minds. "buddher atiprasangah". If there were, you would probably go on limitlessly asking, who is observing that, who is presiding over the destiny of that mind, is there something superior to that? It goes on in pyramidal fashion.

Instead of endeavouring to find the substratum for the whole thing, one light shining in all, apparently and yet not divided, you are creating an endless hierarchy, because you have decided that one is totally independent of the other. If you go on creating an observer, then you are asking for trouble. If you think that you have two completely different minds, one overseeing the other, one controlling the other, one directing the other, then there may be such terrible confusion that there will be universal schizophrenia. "smrti samkaras ca" is a confusion of memory - which mind is going to receive what kind of impression? When you do something, what you call the lower mind says, "Ah, well done, beautiful" and what you call the upper mind says, "Oh my God, it's terrible, how could I do this?" There's a conflict going on here, between the mind and the supermind, the ego and the superego. Is that what we are looking for? If that is so, then schizophrenia will be a normal thing. Universal schizophrenia means universal abnormalcy, but we are unable to function intelligently or sanely in such a condition, because such a condition is not the true, real condition.

This is the experience of everyone; that this inner intelligence is undivided and indivisible and therefore in it there is observation without an observer. The mind is an observed object. Just as you are able to see another, even so the moods of the mind are also observed. One is able to say, "My mind is disturbed, the mind is dull, I am confused, or the mind is clear" so that the mind itself becomes an object of observation.

citer apratisaṁkramāyās tad ākārā

'pattau sva buddhi saṁvedanaṁ IV.22.

(The undivided intelligence or homogeneous consciousness in which there is no movement of thought is aware of its own enlightened or awakened nature on account of its awareness of the apparent movement of thought. There is paradoxical

movement in non-movement which is the total intelligence.)

Suddenly the great master uses another word. One who studies these Sutras has to take note of these special Sutras where a new word or a new concept is introduced. I pointed out the other day the word "citta". It can be, and has been used, both in terms of the substratum for the mind or the undivided intelligence, as also for the ordinary mind or the individualised consciousness. Now suddenly Patanjali says "citer". This "citi", in contradistinction to "citta", is intelligence. Suited to the context one has to understand these words. One has to study and contemplate, meditate deeply upon these Sutras and then arrive at a proper understanding.

"Citi" is consciousness, undivided and indivisible intelligence. Thus it encompasses, synthesises, and links the object with the mind. Let's go back to the mirror. The sun shines on the mirror, the mirror directs a beam of light onto the wall, and the light links all these three. What are the three? The three are one; the same light is reflected in the mirror and projected onto the wall. Somehow there seems to be a link but the link is also light. It is not as though there is a light there, another light in the mirror here and a projected light there. The light is in effect one, single and indivisible. If you obstruct that light, the mirror becomes dead, useless, and the object is not illumined. In this indivisible intelligence the mind seems to shine as if independent, and it seems to have the power of comprehension. It seems to be an apparent reality, but that is not so. When it faces this inner light, it seems to have a luminosity of its own, and in that luminosity the external object is seen.

All these are dependent upon this one, single, undivided and indivisible inner intelligence. In this inner intelligence there seems to arise an entity called the mind, which is not an entity totally independent of this inner intelligence. It reflects this inner intelligence in such a way that it seems as though that mind itself is intelligence. That intelligence comprehends a thing called an external object, projects its own ideas, its own notions and its own definitions upon it, and then says I know this to be so and.

so. What sees? It is this inner intelligence that really sees. That being consciousness, it is always conscious, ever aware. Whether the mirror is turned towards the sun or away from the sun, the sun always shines. Whether the mind functions, thinking, feeling or experiencing, or whether the mind goes fast asleep, that intelligence is always there. You and I are conversing with each other - you are listening and I am talking - and the mind is very active. In that state obviously this mind-mirror is facing this inner light, this intelligence. Therefore the intelligence is reflected in the mind, enabling it to function, even to feel that it is an independent entity capable of knowing and understanding an object. Then later we fall asleep; the mind covers itself with a veil and goes to sleep, but that inner intelligence is awake even then. The sun never sets; it is the earth that turns around. Even so, this inner intelligence is forever awake, forever alert, forever intelligent, forever conscious. It is always aware, it is awareness. Why does it shine? It shines because it is awareness.

(At the end of the talk after hearing the Yoga Vasistha reading for this day - February 20th Vol. I - Swamiji requested that it be added to the text of the talk. It follows:)

20th FEBRUARY

svayam astaṁ gate bāhye svajñānād uditā citiḥ
svayam jadeṣu jāḍyena padaṁ sausuptam āgatā

VASISTHA continued:

That consciousness indeed exists here, knowing "I cannot be cut, I cannot be burnt, I cannot be made wet, I cannot be dried; I am eternal, omnipresent and unchanging and unmoving." This is the truth. People like to argue and confuse others; they are indeed confused. But, O Rama, we are beyond confusion. Changes in the unchanging are imagined by ignorant and deluded people: but in the vision of sages who have self-knowledge no change whatsoever has taken place in consciousness.

O Rama, consciousness alone has spread itself out as space,

without undergoing any change in itself. After that, consciousness alone appears as the wind that has the quality of motion. And then consciousness alone appears as fire, water, and the earth with its minerals, and also the bodies of living beings.

When the notion of an external knowable has been removed, self-knowledge arises: and when in it there is the notion of inertia or ignorance, the state of deep sleep has come to it. Hence, since consciousness alone exists at all times, it may be said that space exists and does not exist, the world exists and does not exist.

Even as heat is to fire, whiteness is to a conch-shell, firmness is to a mountain, liquidity to water, sweetness is to sugarcane, butter is to milk, coolness is to ice, brightness is to illumination, oil is to mustard seed, flow is to a river, sweetness is to honey, ornament is to gold, aroma is to a flower - the universe is to consciousness. The world exists because consciousness is: and the world is the body of consciousness. There is no division, no difference, no distinction. Hence the universe can be said to be both real and unreal: real because of the reality of consciousness which is its own reality, and unreal because the universe does not exist as universe, independent of consciousness. This consciousness is indivisible and has no parts nor limbs. In it the mountain, the ocean, the earth, the rivers, etc., do not exist as such, but only as consciousness; hence there are no parts nor limbs in consciousness.

But, because of the unreality of the universe, etc., it cannot be said that their own cause, viz., the consciousness is also unreal: such a statement would only be a set of words with no meaning - for it runs counter to our experience, and the existence of consciousness cannot be denied.

(At this stage, the third evening set in: and the assembly dispersed.)

III

Talks given on different occasions throughout the Island.

I

Yoga Asanas and Integral Living.

There are two views in regard to the practice of yoga. I am talking about the practice of yoga asanas. First, that it is most important, and that is all that there is, that yoga means yoga asanas. There are many teachers, many great yogis in India who adopt that view. If you are able to do a paschimottan asana for three hours at a stretch, you see God. Or in any case, whatever you see will be God; put it that way. I heard it from a great yogi in Rishikesh that if you do the headstand, sirshasana for two or three hours you will get great siddhis, psychic powers, and you will get enlightenment. This is one view. There's another view, which is also held by great saints and sages, yogis and particularly again, Rishikesh in the Himalayas: you should never do any asanas, no postures, because the yoga postures are physical and the more you indulge in these, the more you will be body-conscious, whereas real yoga is forgetting the body and going into the transcendental realm. Both these are right. There is nothing wrong with either of these view points,as long as you realise that they are both view points.

My Guru, Swami Sivananda, had another viewpoint and that was the middle view point: both these are right and so, take something from each and make a kitcheree of your own. Kitcheree is something which is neither pure rice nor pure dhal but a mixture of these plus some vegetable. Can we have a vision of both these together? Which means you must practise yoga asanas, you should not neglect the body, you should not neglect your health, because as my Guru often said, without good health you cannot achieve anything in life and you cannot attain God-realisation. But if you take it too far, then again you become

neurotic. Why do you want to be healthy? Do you want to live forever? It is not possible. You want to be always healthy? That also is not possible. You can do all sorts of things, keep yourself in tolerably good health, but nobody can stop the ageing process. And some sorts of mosquitoes, bugs and spiders nobody can arrest. Once in a while, there is bad weather, and you are subjected to it. Once in a while there is some epidemic and you are subjected to that, and occasionally some sort of ill health is also inevitable. I'm not a pessimist, but I see these things are facts. So you must practise yoga asanas and pranayama and meditation, without losing sight of these simple truths, that the body is a perishable thing. It is here today, it will go away, it will abandon you one of these days.

What is the end of Life? Death. That's what this havan ceremony means. This little girl was a bit worried that instead of throwing nice halva into the mouth, she had to throw it into the fire. The truth that is illustrated in this havan is that, if you go on eating that halva, you'll become fatter and fatter. It's not a problem except to the feet and the legs that have to carry all that fat. It is not a serious problem, because eventually you are going to return all that fat to this same fire. You can either put this fat straight into the fire now and be done with it, or put it into your mouth and store it in your body and afterwards put it away in the cemetery. There, there is a havan and your whole body will be offered into that havan, it is the same thing.

So you must practise these yoga asanas with this awareness. You are aware that the body is not permanent. Whatever you do, it will die and however much you try to avoid it, it is likely to grow old and it is also likely to be subjected to some illness. If this is clearly understood then your attitude towards the practice of yoga becomes wisdom. You are not doing anything foolishly, you are full of wisdom, and at the same time your attitude to life also changes.

You have been hearing all these readings, sayings from great men. What do they mean by egotism? What is ego? Have you seen the ego? Has anybody seen the ego? Nobody has seen it and yet all of us are subject to this ego. What is it? It

is merely confused belief that "I am the body". It is because you think "I am the body" that craving arises. All these - lust, anger, greed, hatred and jealousy - spring from this one wrong idea that "I am the body". If the wrong idea is not there, there is not lust, there is no anger, there is no greed, there is no hate, there is no jealousy, there is no fear. It is so simple. You can't fight with hatred. If you are jealous, you are jealous, you can't fight with it. If you are afraid, you can't fight with that. You must see its own source. Its source is this ego. What is ego? Ego is not some kind of demon or something which is stuck in the left side of your heart, it is merely this idea "I am the body".

What is the body made of? This thing that you put into the fire, "svaha", the same thing, when you put it into the mouth becomes your body, and somehow the same halva, when it is put into your mouth becomes your body, and tomorrow it says: "Hey, look at me! What is there to look at? Halva! All this is halva! If you had put it into that fire it would have become ashes right now under your nose, right in front of you. And you would have seen that is what happens to the food that is eaten by you; it'll happen later, but in the meantime a lot of mischief is done by this halva. Halva is eaten and processed into the body, and the body is mistaken for "I am the body". That's all. That is the ego.

Should I now say that "I am not the body"? No. The body is there, and there is also an idea at present that there is some connection between you and this body. You don't know if you are the body, you don't know if the body is yours, but there is some connection, which means if there is a headache you cannot think properly. So look after the body, avoid the headache, but not for its own sake. If you think "I am the body and therefore I am looking after it", all the other things will come: lust, anger, greed, vanity, hatred and jealousy. If you see the body for what it is, that it is made of halva, the food that is eaten, then you realise that there seems to be some connection between 'me' and this body. If something happens tothe body you are not able to function properly, that's all. So I look after this body, practise the yoga asanas, have a proper diet, proper work, proper sleep, proper rest. A

disciplined life. Disciplined, not because somebody else tells you but because all these things are conducive to health, physical and mental health. All these things are conducive to peace of mind. You are able to function better. That's all. If this aspiration is kept, that itself will decide what should be done and what should not be done. You will also discover that, apart from yoga asanas, apart from proper food, rest and all the other things, even your thoughts and feelings and emotions seem to have something to do with your health, especially mental health. Also physical health. When this awareness is generated in the body, in the mind, then your whole life takes on a certain discipline. This discipline cannot be explained. It is not a discipline which can be noted down and hung on the wall; " Do this, don't do that". It is something which results from an intense inner sensitivity. Cultivate that sensitivity, all the rest follows. Then you are able to practise yoga in the proper light. You can practise your asanas, you can practise your pranayama, you can even at least pretend to meditate, you can do all that, and you can live a good life, a disciplined life, moral life, ethical life. A life which will be edifying both to yourself and to the society in you live.

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The Way to Non-division

The word yoga means union. Where there is division we bring about a non-division. I think most of us are familiar with this. While you are driving a car, what is the mind doing? You are not observing the road. Somebody is talking to you, you are not only listening to them. In addition to that something else is going on. There is what is beautifully called the internal dialogue. The only time during the day when this does not happen is in sleep. There's a totality in connection with the sleep. When you wake up and you recollect the dream, or the sleep, your present intellect - your waking intellect - suggests, "Both in dream and in sleep I was helpless. Being human I must be able to control myself

now, when I am awake." That is where the split happens. I mustn't be helpless, I mustn't let myself go, but I must control myself." When you decide, "I want to enjoy myself", "I want to please myself," an "I-myself" split has taken place. When this "I-myself" split remains, all action that proceeds from that split is wrong action. If there is to be an intelligent approach to life as opposed to an instinctual mode of living, then the intelligence must become aware that the split is not there. Whereas the animal blindly follows its instincts, you and I must live - life being total it should be without a division. The animal is unaware of what it is doing, I am aware of what I am doing. In the case of the animal it is like a sleep state, in my case there is an enlightened state. The animal is guided by its instincts and I'm in an enlightened state and therefore I become aware of the instincts themselves, aware without creating a split. If I am aware of myself there is a split. Then you divide it into the higher self and lower self, and think that the higher self chases the lower self. When the lower self becomes more powerful you somehow elevate it to the higher self.

Until awareness arises this split cannot be repaired. When this 'I-myself' split is seen to be danger, then that awareness which becomes aware of this factor acts as the monitor - self monitor - without motive. The awareness itself is awareness and therefore it is not blind. The awareness is aware only of the split. You are sitting and doing your japa, you are not aware of "I am aware" - that is a split. But you are aware that "I am still hearing the mantra and the attention is still wandering away.

So they say, first become completely aware of the mantra without becoming aware of anything else. If you are capable of doing that, then you have achieved a state of concentration of mind which is applicable not only to this meditation or japa, but to everything that you do in life. Is it possible for us, to begin with, to achieve concentration, which means I do exactly what I am doing. This is only half the battle. When this awareness is awakened, it becomes aware of the arising of desire at its source at once, not afterwards. Inside myself the split is still there, but I am aware of that. There is a craving inside of yourself. If you want to yield to it,

you are aware that you are doing it. Then if you are intelligent enough you may be able to see that a certain bad habit is a lot stronger than your intelligence. Once that episode is over, then the urge or the tremendous push, the drive, is no longer great. That is the reason why the saints prescribed immediate repentence and atonement and all the rest of it.

At that time if you sit and meditate or pray, then it is possible to strengthen this intelligence, to strengthen this awareness against a future onslaught. It is then possible for you to go a little deeper into yourself and see how this craving builds up, from where it has come in the first place. It is possible in that moment of repentence or regret for this ego to collapse. There at-one-ment, atonement takes place. The ego which was saying, "I want it" has come to the understanding that "Because I want it I am suffering now." The intelligence sees it and this "I want it" is prevented from arising in the future.

This pure awareness in which there is no split, the awareness which does not split the intelligence between the higher self and the lower self is aware of whatever is happening. Then there is no craving. Natural life goes on and that life is free from craving, hate and anger. There is intelligence, a constant awareness. In that constant awareness there is an awareness of the potential rising of lust, anger and greed. Since the body and mind are there and still functioning, life goes on. There is no struggle or effort here, but the awareness which is even aware of all the happenings of the past, is very vigilant. If one is constantly aware of the workings of the mind, then that life becomes blessed. And what happens from there on is right action. In such a life lust, anger and greed will be totally absent.

And what about the ego? Ego is nothing but lust, anger and greed - what else is there? If all the likes and dislikes are removed, what is called the ego is also gone. They caution you that as long as the body is there and the mind is functioning in relation to the body, it is possible for the ego to arise again. And how will it rise? It can rise only as lust, anger and greed. If this awareness is monitoring all the time, they don't arise. First you become aware of it and

thus consciously eliminate it and then let the awareness shine and thus prevent the recurrence of the old problem.

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The Simple Birth of a Great Divinity "Krishna"

Today we commemorate the birth of Krishna. The birth story is narrated in the Bhagavatham and I will only take up the last part of it. Krishna's parents had been imprisoned by the king Kamsa because he was afraid that Krishna, Devaki's eighth child would kill him. Some ethereal voices had warned him. So he put the couple in prison and killed all the seven children. Kamsa was already a sinner, according to the Shastras, but the crime of the criminal is taken to its climax. They say that this Kamsa, the demon, who had killed so many others and done so many other crimes, had to do this in order to rouse the Divine - he must also be guilty of killing babies at birth. So seven of them were killed. The time had come for him to suffer and he tried to defy destiny.

We do that very often in our own lives. It's clear that something is going to happen and whether we know that this is going to happen or not, we struggle hard to avoid getting into that situation. You try your best to avoid getting into trouble, but you know it is right on your path, you can't avoid it. You mind is there constantly.

In this case it is slightly different. First by putting this couple in prison and destroying all these babies, and then when the baby escaped by panicking and once again having the children massacred, he added to his accumulation of sins. It didn't work, because the Divine is not capable of being understood by the human mind. This is what one has to understand right in the beginning of the Krishna story. I may pretend that I know my destiny but the Divine is incomprehensible. However clever you may be, the Divine has its own way, and it is notpossible for us to know it, leave along fight against it.

Krishna was born in the prison. Perhaps those of you who have studied the Bible might find a parallel there with Jesus

Christ who as a descendent of King David had to take birth in a manger. Why do the scriptures tell us these things and go to this detail? For instance, neither the Bible nor the Bhagavatham mentions the name of the midwife, or whether there was a doctor. Why do they want to specifically mention that Jesus was born in the manger and Krishna was born in prison? Merely to inform us that when the Divine takes birth it need not be under extraordinary circumstances, it could be in a very humble style. It need not be something spectacular - suddenly the cloud bursts and the lights come down. God can incarnate himself in the normal way as any other baby is born, and even there it can be in a very humble situation. We are not looking for something extraordinary in the birth stories of Krishna or Jesus, but rather something quite simple.

Then a little bit of an extraordinary element is introduced here. As soon as the baby was born it had to be spirited away. Krishna who could destroy demons and demonesses when he was still an infant, could also have killed Kamsa. The time was not yet; there was something else to be done. So Vasudeva, the father, is instructed to take this baby Krishna to a nearby village and leave it there near another woman who had also given birth at the same time to a girl. They say that that girl was Durga; this fact is also mentioned in the Durga Saptashati. The heavily locked prison doors open of their own accord and the hefty guards - very strong and powerful men - fall asleep as though drugged. Vasudeva takes this Krishna and goes out. Wherever he goes everything is asleep, silent and quiet. It starts to rain and the baby is somehow protected. The father had to cross the river Yamuna, and the Yamuna parts and gives way. Then he goes to Gokula. Sure enough he finds the mother with the new-born infant. He places Krishna by the side of this mother who was still asleep, and strangely enough, the story tells us that she did not even know whether the child she had given birth to was a boy or girl. Leaving this baby there, he picks up the girl and walks back. As he enters the palace and the prison, the baby starts screaming waking up the whole world, the Yamuna reunites again and the doors lock themselves. Maybe this did happen, maybe it did not happen, we

do not know. The scripture says so, it's quite possible.

There is an interesting philosophy here. If you have Krishna in your heart, in your arms, in your hands, then all the inner doors open: everything opens, your heart, your mind, your intellect, your intuition. The devils that are in your mind and heart - lust, anger, greed - fall asleep. You can come to a satsang and sing, "Hare Rama, Hare Krishna", and you can go on; for the time being they are asleep. Then they are no obstacles at all. If there is a shower of rain, there is an umbrella which comes and protects you. You may have some troubles and difficulties in life, but you also have enough protection.

Then you stand baffled on the bank of a river, you can't cross it. Such situations occur in our lives quite often. It's not a matter of a drizzle and a fear that you might get wet, but there is a serious obstacle. When you stand there baffled, something happens so that you are able to cross. Whether miraculously the river itself becomes split in two or not we don't know. This example is given in the Yoga Vasistha and some other scriptures too. Life is like a river. It is both an obstacle and an aid. You see the beauty of especially the river. As you are going there it obstructs your path, but if you have a boat it is the very river, the very water that carries the boat across to the other side. That which seems to be an obstacle, itself proves to be a tremendous aid, if you know how to use it. Somehow with Krishna in your hand, in your heart, even though you find obstacles on your path, you are able to cross the sea of life, the river of life. Vasudeva goes there, places the child near Yashoda, and picks up the little girl, Maya. You pick up Maya and come back to where you were; the world wakes up -- all this lust, anger and greed. Then you come in, all the doors are shut and once again you are imprisoned in your own prison of ignorance.

As long as you are alive, both these things will go on. As long as there is a body and a mind, this pendulum-swinging from wisdom to ignorance and ignorance to wisdom will go on. The mind is what connects the body with the consciousness, that generates the notion or the feeling that "I am this body". If there is some pain 'there' (pointing to a girl's head), it is

not my head that is aching, it is her head. Only if there is pain 'here', is it my headache. What is it that brings about this misunderstanding, even though we all know that intelligence cannot be limited, that consciousness cannot be limited, that that body and this body are made of the same substance? No one knows, except that that factor which brings about this confusion is called the 'mind', and as long as the mind functions in this body the danger of swinging back to ignorance cannot be ruled out.

The story goes on. Krishna destroys all the demons. When you read these stories you cannot help feeling that Krishna will incarnate again and again in order to destroy all the wicked people, and protect the good people. I don't know how we get into this mess; the wicked people are always 'they' and the good people are always 'we'. What guarantee is there that I am considered good in His eyes? It is not enough if I consider myself good, of course all of us consider ourselves good. It is not even enough if you consider me good; I can bribe or threaten you. He has to consider me good. How do I know what will make Him think I am good? Unless He thinks or knows I am good, I am finished.

There is another mystery in Krishna's life. Krishna granted salvation to so many people. The Gopis became enlightened and all his devotees - Vidura, Akrura, Arjuna, Udhava - became enlightened. However, really the first person to be redeemed or liberated by him was Putana, a woman who came to kill him. The Bhagavatham says very beautifully that by merely offering a tulsi leaf or a flower someone gets moksha. This woman nursed him, suckled him, and so was redeemed. Now the confusion begins. The person whom the scripture itself describes, defines as diabolical, is granted moksha first. Then there is a long list. Krishna did not kill anybody at all. Why? Anyone whom he touches is redeemed. You can't be touched by God without being redeemed. You and I think that even if we have a vision of Krishna, which may well be a hallucination, we are redeemed. Those people saw him face to face.

There is also a rather interesting theory that during the Mahabharata war, when Krishna was on the side of the

Pandavas, the Kauravas who were facing him, fighting Arjuna and often him too got salvation first. When they died, they died looking at him. The Pandavas were behind him, they saw only his back. Krishna himself says in the Bhagavad Gita that whatever your mind contemplates at the time life leaves this body that is what you attain. How is it possible for these demons who died looking at him to have gone to hell? So they got salvation, liberation, redemption first.

That is also specifically hinted in the Bhagavatham. Whatever your role or occupation in this life may be, if somehow you bring God into this life, you are redeemed. You don't need any other qualification. Gajendra was not educated and Vidura was a half-caste; the one thing they all had in common was that they had brought God into their lives.

The scripture even went so far as to say that your feelings towards God may be anything. You may even hate. We don't do that. We run after something else. We run after this Maya. If we can even hate God with all our heart, that's a great thing, but nowadays that is completely out. I don't think there are many people who have hatred for God or even for good people. If there are some good people, some sadhus and so on, you quietly ignore them. You don't care either to kill them or to feed them. This indifference shows that we're not interested in this at all; the mind is not after God at all - neither in a positive way as love nor in a negative way as hate. That is an unfortunate position. Whether we love, or hate, or fear God with all our heart - whatever be the relationship - if there is a relationship, that will redeem us. The example given there is fire. Whether you hate, or fear, or fall in love with that fire, it'll burn you. Just because something is burning, and you say: "Ah, beautiful, I love that fire", the fire is not going to say: "Alright, I'll give you a long life". No, it will still burn.

In the Narada Bhakti Sutras there is a beautiful expression. You can attain god-realisation if you can be totally devoted, totally in love with Krishna, like the Gopis of Brindavan. Then in the next Sutra a doubt is raised and answered. The Gopis did not love Krishna knowing that he was God Almighty. They loved his form, his features, they loved him as a boy; he was their boyfriend. They were not aware of the divine glory

of Krishna. (This is presumed, I don't know if it is true.) Even that is immaterial. They were devoted to Krishna, and that was enough. Your ideas of God are irrelevant.

The mind is the factor which makes you think, or feel that "This is my body, this I am, I am imprisoned in this body, I am caught up in this body". Since that factor is the mind, transcendence of the mind destroys the whole of the game. Whether you are in love with God or hate God or are afraid of God, whatever be the attitude, you reach the Supreme.

In the meantime life goes on. I wanted to say "Life has to go on", but that is an absurd expression. Who are we to say that life has to go on? It goes on, and one sees that this ongoing life involves all manner of activity, some which tradition and the individual mind regard as desirable or good action and some as not so good action. We may write books and shout at the top of our voice: "Ahimsa, ahimsa, non-violence, nobody should hurt anybody else", but war will go on and probably you will also go and fight. That's what Krishna pointed out. In the Durga Saptashati there is a beautiful expression: "In your heart there is great compassion, you are all love, but oh Mother, when it comes to hitting, you hit hard." So even that may have to be done.

Krishna points out in the Bhagavad Gita the two things from which one should free oneself, lust and anger, or love in the sense of attachment and hate. These are not in nature at all. These are shadows which are cast on the mind by the cloud of its own ignorance. The sun shines and when the sun shines over a sheet of water, the water evaporates. Because of the sun's rays the vapour goes up and forms a cloud which hides the sun and casts a shadow on the very water from which it came. It's crazy but true. So even though God is light, supreme light, somehow on account of that supreme light all the manifestation takes place, like the cloud arising. In spite of the sun there also arises the shadow. On account of this sun, this light, this knowledge, this consciousness, somehow the shadow also comes into being. How we don't know, and it is that shadow that takes the form of attachment and hate in our minds, in our lives.

If it is possible, overcome these or direct them also to God. This is another trick given to us in the Narada Bhakti Sutras. If you have pride, be proud that you are a devotee; if you have great attachment, be attached to God; if you hate, hate Krishna. Then the cloud is dispersed. Be devoted in the sense of being god-conscious all the time. Whatever be the manner, your station, your position, or your occupation in life, let all these be turned godward and then there is no problem. You may have to marry and raise a family. You may have to do things which society regards as not desirable. Alright, that's also part of the game of life and you may do something marvellous as a very virtuous man, very good. Direct all your emotions towards God himself. Turn all these Godward by enthroning the Lord in your heart. That was the special and unique message of Krishna's life.

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The Perennial Light Within

I think most of you know the stories connected with Divali. One is the story of Rama, how he went to Lanka, destroyed all the evil forces there, and came back. On the day he returned to Ayodhya, he came towards the evening. That was the last day of the fourteen-year period he had been in exile, and Bharata had said if he didn't come back when the time expired, he would commit suicide. And so, as it was the last day of his exile, he returned to Ayodhya, even though it was late in the evening. When the people heard that he was coming, they lit earthen lamps and illuminated the whole city. That's one legend.

The other legend is found in the other Puranas. There was a demon called Narakasura, who was a great killer, and had killed all sorts of princes, princesses and kings and collected all their queens - sixteen thousand of them. He had imprisoned them in his palace, and Krishna was made to fight with him. The fight is described very beautifully in the Bhagavatham. It sounds as if they had some sort of tanks and planes and bombers and so on. Eventually Narakasura was killed, and Divali is supposed to be in commemoration of the victory over evil.

When this demon was killed, his own mother approached Krishna and said something very interesting: "I am happy that you killed my son." They say that this attitude prevailed in Rajasthan among the medieval princes, namely that, if I am your son, and I become very wicked and vicious, and somebody comes and kills me, you are happy. So Narakasura's mother approached Krishna and said, "I am very happy that you've destroyed him, because he was a wicked boy, but I am also happy that he died at your hands. It is a great honour, a great blessing." And then she sang the praises of Krishna, and Krishna said, "Alright, I'm very pleased with your devotion, ask a boon." And she said, "May people commemorate this event for all time to come". This shows that there was still a trace of attachment. That was why this particular Chaturdarshi (day before the new moon) is known as Naraka-chaturdarshi.

Once again, when you look at the name Narakasura, you see that Naraka means hell, and the whole story relates to the day of the new moon. It is in fact the darkest day, the darkest night. So what is Naraka? Naraka is total darkness, absolute darkness. It is quite likely that there was a demon called Narakasura, and Krishna killed him. It's quite possible that the whole story is literally, historically true. But it is also true, when you look at the whole scene, that it was Naraka that was destroyed. Naraka is associated with dark night. "Remember this, remember this: when you are sunk in darkness, you cannot save yourself. You cannot even kill that darkness. When you are completely and totally confused, without a ray of hope, what are you going to do? You cannot get rid of that darkness. You are in a strange place, and that place is utterly dark, you don't even know if there is a light in the room. You don't even know where the switch is. When we are in that situation, absolutely nothing can be done by one's own effort. One can collapse. That is where grace is needed. It is only the Divine that can switch the lights on." No amount of beating your breast and yelling and howling can do that, nothing. One might say that at that time one should realise the light within. But that is possible only for Yajnavalkya, not for us.

There was a great sage called Yajnavalkya, whose story is narrated in one of the Upanishads, the Brihadaranyaka

Upanishad. A woman sage enters into a debate with him, and she says: "Yajnavalkya, tell me, what is the light in which people function?" "Sunlight," was the answer. And she says, "Alright, you are clever, but when the sun has set?" "Moonlight!" "Ha, you're still clever. And when the moon is not there, or the moon has set and the sun has set?" "Stars." "And when there are no stars?" "Fire, a flashlight." You must observe this technique very carefully here. He does not suddenly jump in and say: "Atmajnana". To make a right statement at the wrong time is destructive, is meaningless. So when you keep repeating "God, God, God," all the way through, you are not only wasting your time even worse, you are creating a misunderstanding. This young man comes to you and says, "I've got a little headache, what must I do?" Don't tell him to pray, now. First make him take a cold shower, offer something else, all kinds of remedies - and only when all these have been tried, suggest prayer. Then his prayer will be genuine, it comes not only from the bottom of the heart, from the bottom of the toe! So the technique these Upanishadic sages evolved was to lead you from truth to greater truth. From grosser reality to subtler reality. Step by step, from the obvious to the not-so obvious.

And so Yajnavalkya finally gives the answer: "Atma; there is a light within that gives the answer; there is a light within that guides you." And at that point it becomes absolutely clear, because we have gone from what is totally obvious, superficially obvious, grossly obvious, into the subtle, into the more subtle, into the subtlest. One can say that even when you are in total darkness, this inner light is there, and that will guide you. But that is good only for Yajnavalkya, and not for you and me. I must first become a Yajnavalkya, and then it is possible for me to find that inner light in times of such crises. So one has to depend upon God. Only God can destroy that total darkness. So your Vedas also pray - "Asato ma sat gamaya tamaso ma jyotir gamaya". "I am surrounded by this darkness, I am sunk in this darkness. I can't find my path. I can't find my way out of this." Only that realisation is possible - and for that you need God's grace, otherwise you go to a bottle or some drug, or some other totally irrelevant thing. You are standing near the edge of the forest and there, in a state of panic, thinking that you

can save yourself, you start rebelling against that darkness, and fighting it, and you think you can conquer it, All the time you are running deeper into the forest. Again, our famous favourite theme: when you are in such a state of confusion, stop, freeze - and pray.

You don't know the direction - it's total darkness. And you are both frightened and confused. At that point you don't know which way to go - sit down and pray. It is better to collapse there and fall, then to start running, because it is quite possible you may run into deeper darkness.

There is a puzzling mantra in the Isavasya Upanishad. It says: "They are sunk in deep darkness who are devoted to ignorance, or worldliness. Into even greater darkness enter they who are devoted to knowledge," which means, if you think you are clever, you are running into even deeper darkness. Don't think you are clever and you can push the darkness away. In that panicky confused situation, if you start running it is quite possible you will run into deeper darkness. Instead wait. Stop. Freeze.

That's the message. Pray - pray for the light, because at that point no human help is of any avail. It is not merely that I cannot help myself - you cannot help me either. We are all sinking. It is not a gospel of impotence, "I don't want to do anything." I recognise that in this situation no human effort is of any use. When that becomes a realisation, then there is Divine Light. Krishna comes and destroys the demon. Today we commemorate that event and this truth.

There are two problems here. First who is going to remind us of the reminder? We build a memorial, or we evolve a festival to commemorate this truth, this story, and we observe this thing regularly every year. Every year we observe Divali, every year we observe Christmas, whatever it is. Who is going to tell us what it means and what it should mean to us? Even if we are reminded now, later we are only interested in these sweetmeats and fun and crackers and nice new clothes. Who is interested in the light? Who is even aware that we are in this terrible darkness? When we are unaware that we are in darkness, we see a perverted light. This is the fun. This is what they call Maya, and this is what the

Isavasya Upanishad ironically calls "vidya". You don't know yourself, and yet you understand the world, you understand other people, you understand who I am - all that knowledge is only a deeper darkness. A perversion or misunderstanding. Without self-knowledge I am trying to understand you. I am trying to understand this world, and I think I know who I am too. All this is a kind of knowledge which is worse than ignorance. And so, hanging on to this knowledge, we go deeper into the forest of darkness.

The foolish man who knows that he does not know, might somehow stumble upon the truth by God's grace, but the idiot who thinks he knows, is finished. He goes from darkness to denser darkness. So when we are in darkness, is it possible for a commemoration like this Divali to remind us? Is it possible for us to remember this commemoration, and remind ourselves at that psychological moment that this is the darkness, and now I must collapse? "Hari Om tat sat - Bhagavan, please help." So when these great sages evolved festivals like this, Divali, Christmas, Rosh Hashana, their intention was that by celebrating this annually, regularly, we would remind ourselves of this spiritual truth, because this seems to be so difficult. What we usually do is, we make merry, we convert it into some kind of celebration. The truth is completely forgotten, totally abandoned. Those who are aware of this truth don't need the remembrance day at all. They are aware of it all the time. So unless you are aware of it all the time, you are not going to be aware of it in a crisis. It's very simple, isn't it? If you are not aware of a simple truth all the time, in a crisis you are not going to be aware of it at all. A very great saint of South India, composed a beautiful prayer: "At the time of death, when I am struggling for breath, and my throat is choked how am I going to remember you, O Lord?" When I am healthy and happy and peaceful and prosperous, and everything is going on fine, even then it is difficult for me to remember God, and you want me to believe that at the time when my throat is choked and I can't even breathe, I am going to think of God? Nonsense. So better remember now. "Lord, better take my heart now, so from now on let the remembrance be continuous, otherwise there is no hope."

We have two categories of people, first, those who are continuously remembering the truth or God, for them there is no

problem of darkness at all. They are walking in light. And secondly the others who are too far gone, who therefore will convert all these festivals of light into funfare. As far as these are concerned, all your memorials are useless, hopeless. So the perpetually vigilant person doesn't need all these memorials, and the stupid one doesn't deserve it. It is only in the case of some people who are half awake, who are on the fence, not quite this side, not quite that side, for them these festivals and memorials may be of some help. And if, by God's grace again, it so happens that on the eve of getting drowned in this darkness, you and I happen to pass through a satsang like this and remind ourselves of the truth, it's possible that we might act wisely and sensibly; otherwise these memorials are of no use at all.

So one has to remember this truth. Only if, one day, on one of these Divalis, we suddenly realise that this is the message, that life itself is potential calamity and that I need the light of God, and only God can give me this light, then there is humility, prayerfulness, contemplativeness. Then the purpose of the saints and sages in instituting the Divali will be of some use.

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The Significance of The Avatar

Watching the TV celebration of Satya Sai Baba's birthday, I was reminded of the historic All-India Tour of Gurudev Sivananda. On returning to the Ashram at Rishikesh, I had the good fortune of writing a 600 page report of the tour. In the introduction to this, I remarked that it was as if we were in the days of Rama and Krishna. When I showed the draft of this to Swami Sivananda, he asked me how I could compare him to these incarnations of God.

When it comes to the definition of an Avatar, we read in the Bhagavad Gita: "God incarnates again and again in order to re-establish Dharma". The sign of an Incarnation of God is that he touches, transforms lives.

I am not a total optimist, nor a total pessimist, but being half optimist, half pessimist, I call myself a realist. Look at the story of Rama and Krishna. How many people recognised their real divinity? In the case of Rama there were only two or three people who knew him to be God. Visvamitra did not come to him for instruction; on the contrary he told Rama what to do! Ahalya was merely glad to be restored to her former beauty by him, and Sabari was pleased to have seen him. That is all. Even in the case of Krishna not many recognised his divinity.

You may say that you recognise Satya Sai Baba's divinity - that is surely why you sing Kirtans and celebrate his birthday. Remember that God incarnates to re-establish righteousness. How many of you participate in that mission? After that fantastic tour of India, when millions had seen and heard him Gurudev said: "Lecturing to thousands is useless - better go from house to house and conduct a little satsang - that may leave a lasting impression". We may disagree with Gurudev here, for even this mass communication is not without its own benefit. The master sows a seed, and either in this life or in the next birth, it will germinate and produce its fruits. It is possible that in every one of the thousands of people who sing the glories of an Avatar some change takes place.

Do you recognise a divinity in your midst? "I incarnate again and again to protect the good and destroy the wicked", said Krishna. That is as much a warning as a promise. Whenever I hear this verse from the Bhagavad Gita I feel like trembling. Supposing God were to come in front of us right now and say: "I will protect all the good and destroy all the evil". Where would we be? To me this statement is a warning to be careful. How many of us are prepared to act upon this warning? I will leave you with this question - not the answer. The answer must come from you.

During morning meditation we recite a sloka: "The Guru's form is to be meditated upon, the Guru's feet should be worshipped, we should regard the Guru's word as gospel truth and the Guru's grace will redeem us".

We meditate on the Guru's form, why? I have a picture of Krishna, Rama, Venkatesa, but I have never seen them. I can

visualise them according to the image drawn by someone else. There may not be complete rapport with such an image. So, as a preliminary to meditating on such an image, I contemplate my own Guru whom I know, have been with and can talk to. Then turning the mind within becomes very easy. I am not talking merely to an image made of stone, bronze, or paper, but I talk to my Guru, a living presence, and he can tell me from within: "Sit straight, your mind is wandering". It is a person-to-person communication, and that is a tremendous help. In the Ashram in India we used to worship Gurudev Sivananda almost every day, although in the beginning he objected to this. This was a sincere, not a mechanical worship and was of great spiritual importance, purifying the heart, and generating devotion to the Guru.

"The Guru's word should be regarded as gospel truth". Very few people are prepared to accept this part of this mantra - we think the first and second parts suffice. What is the use of being half saved? Would you be satisfied to be half shaved? If you do not want to appear in public only half shaved but want to be fully shaved, it is also better to be totally saved! The third aspect of that mantra stresses the need for acting according to the Guru's teaching. We are not all saints, but to the best of our ability we must act according to the Guru's instructions. Are we doing what he said? Have we the devotion to do this? Out of all Krishna's followers Uddhava was probably the only serious disciple.

The pull of worldliness is so great! The body is part of this earth and it is sustained by food. The mind that dwells in this body is worldly and is tempted. It needs superhuman effort to pull the mind away from worldly distractions and towards God. The Guru can help us here. With his grace it is possible for us to make rapid progress, thus justifying his incarnation.

"The Guru's grace will redeem us".

It is not enough to say that God exists. The very fact that you come to satsang shows you have spiritual tendencies. But we step hesitantly instead of plunging in wholeheartedly. If we are sincere, then this grace will bring us close to liberation. We are taking one step further towards

God-realisation all the time. We are moving towards this goal. That is the significance of the Avatar. Our life must be a reflection of the purpose of the mission of the Divine Incarnation - to allow our lives to be transformed.

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Who Cuts The Grooves?

Today we were discussing this business of habit. What is the place of habit in our life? Why do we form habits at all? What happens if we don't have a habit? You can see that the tendency to form habits is there in the system - in both the body and the mind. From one point of view you may say that it is natural to form habits: The habit of getting up in the morning and going to sleep in the evening, or the habit of driving a car almost automatically without having to think of it all the time. What is it in the personality that demands the formation of habits, that forms these habits and how does it benefit by it?

One can immediately see that there is one great advantage, and that is the conservation of energy. If you have learned to drive a car properly you don't have to think about it all the time. When you are typing you don't have to pick out the letters on the keyboard. When there is some freedom from the compulsion to concentrate on the job in hand, your mind can switch off to something else. Then the repeated application of the mind for that particular work does not involve strain or concentration or expenditure of energy. That could well be why the body and mind seem to develop this tendency.

In the same way the body also develops a tendency. You go on eating one type of food and the whole system gears itself to the digestion of that food. But the system is capable of doing something else too, and one must recognise this fact. If you are habituated to sitting down cross-legged, when you begin sitting on a chair there is a certain funny feeling inside the calf muscles. Then you begin sitting on chairs; when you sit down on the floor again cross-legged, there is a different type of funny feeling. It is possible to go from one to the other

and back to the first one, there is no problem.

I must recognise that there is some advantage in forming a habit-pattern. When that action is carried on automatically, even if not mechanically, the mind or the intelligence is free to attend to something else. I am not suggesting that you can dream of a totally irrelevant activity. One person who is an eye-trainer objects to this sort of behaviour. She says that if you are looking at something and then you try to remember somebody or something else, you are defocussing the vision. She doesn't think it's a very healthy practice. Her argument is that the eyes feel cheated. Though the eyes are looking at something, the mind is elsewhere.

The same argument can also be brought in psychologically. For example, if while driving a car, instead of concentrating on the job you make the driving mechanical or automatic and the mind is allowed to think of something else, would it also result in some kind of a split? Then you are habitually absent-minded. That may not be. If you make this automatic then the energy is released. It does not mean that the energy should be deviated to something completely different. Even for a deeper understanding of that very action you may use that energy. That is one reason why I can sit down at the typewriter and type an article or whatever it is straight away. The typing is mechanical, so that the mind can dive deeper into the subject, rather than be worried about the keyboard. Then it's not mechanical. The motions are mechanical, automatic, but the intelligence goes deeper. In that way I am making use of the mind's habit-forming habit and not becoming absent-minded, or distracted. It is concentration, but concentration in depth, not superficial concentration.

I thought it might be of interest to us first to understand the habit-forming mechanism and then to utilise it, knowing that the mind is going to form a habit - whether you call it a good habit or a bad habit - whatever you do. The mind works only on the basis of habits. You change this habit; for a few days it's uncomfortable and then that becomes the habit. You start shaving your head and continue for some time; it is uncomfortable, funny, but then that

becomes a habit and if you change, if you grow hair now, that becomes uncomfortable. Do it for a week or ten days and that becomes the new habit.

Without losing the advantage of habit-formation, can I go a step farther and deeper into it? What I think is very important to us, is the philosophy behind what Gurudev often used to emphasise - the formation of good habits. Habits as a rule are not very desirable, for the very simple reason that you are living a mechanical and blind life. If you recognise that habits are inevitable then you form good habits. There is also a possibility that by using these good habits you can go further by making an indepth study of the mind and its functions.

The second step is even more important. What happens if you detect that a certain habit is undesirable? You might persistently run into some relationship problem. You have some habit and all of the others don't like it. Every time you come into contact with them, they bring up the same subject, "You shouldn't do it". Or it can also be the result of mental distress; it brings you pain. You are doing something habitually and you realise that there is a lot of unplesantness involved in that habit, not necessarily related to others but in yourself. Such may be a habit like drinking whisky or coffee, it doesn't matter what it is.

I see the craving building up. Every time I don't have a cup of coffee a craving builds up and the craving is definitely painful. That I am able to satisfy that craving is another business, but the craving has to be fulfilled. You are no longer the master of your own house; it is a compulsion either external or internal. You have to do it. That "have to" is painful. Since it gives me pain and generates mental discomfort, restlessness and therefore unhappiness, I see that that habit is undesirable - whether it is good or bad we are not going into at all. Restlessness and depression are the same, one follows the other. You are getting restless for some time. This can't go on for ever, so it comes down to depression and once again it builds up.

Here there is a slight difference - there is no conservation of energy. The habit of coffee-drinking is not formed by the mind or the body because it saves energy. A groove is

being cut. The groove may even be physical. For example, someone may feel that if he doesn't have a cup of coffee in the morning his bowels don't move. It's not entirely mental or psychological. The nerves, the body are accustomed to that stimulation.

Who cuts the groove and how is it cut? It can be anything - coffee drinking, gambling or running around with boys and girls. The habit may have been formed by the action being done once and then repeated. Isn't that when the groove is being cut? Maybe you were already predisposed to it - for instance, the famous smoking habit. You don't have to smoke but you look at the others who smoke. They seem to be very civilised and it seems to be the thing to do. The first thing they pass round at all the cocktail parties and even at weddings is a cigarette. The mind, which was a total stranger to this smoking, suddenly gets an idea that perhaps this is important. It is at that point that a predisposition to mischief happens. Till then there is nothing, you are completely innocent. You see somebody else doing it and you do not even know whether that person is happy or unhappy with it. You don't even inquire. The mind begins to form a judgement. First of all you see that the others are doing it and therefore it must be good. When I do it with the idea that it must be good, the mind looks for the good points only. The first time I smoke, it's a strange experience and maybe it's not so pleasant, but you are not aware of the evil, the discomfort, the undesirability of it. Then you begin to repeat it, and as you repeat it, the same prejudice becomes what is called value-judgement. It is good - not that it must be good - it <u>is</u> good. And as this value-judgement cuts a groove in the mind, so you are hooked.

There is a saying in Tamil which explains this phenomenon of habit-forming in a very beautiful, picturesque manner. You think a rock is strong and firm and that an ant is of no consequence in relation to the hardness of the rock. The proverb says, that if ants persist in walking on the rock for a long, long time, a groove will be cut. Ants' legs are not so strong and the rock is firm and terrible, but as time goes on, you will find one of these days a nice little groove on the rock formed by the lotus feet of the ants.

Naturally the mind is also clouded. An evil habit must have its own consequence, whether it is a habit like eating or drinking or any personal relationship. You develop an intensely friendly relationship with someone, but you don't at one point see that this relationship is clouding your intelligence. It's a self-fulfilling nuisance. The mind looks for something good in that wicked experience and for the time being only that exists. You are not aware of the other undesirable aspect of your personality. You only feel the pain. Then when the real source is clouded, you try to blame somebody else or something else for your problem. It is a really serious thing, and it is a vicious circle. I see the unhappiness, but I do not see the source of that unhappiness. I see also that you are somehow involved in this, in my unhappiness. Why? I see this as something good, and you don't like it. I am fond of somebody whom you don't like. This somebody may be causing a lot of trouble to me, but because I am fond of that person, I don't see this. Even the craving to be in that person's company is already making me miserable. Now, I want some reason for this unhappiness. I see that you also don't like the other person, and you are telling me to keep away. So the unhappiness is attributed directly to you. It's a strange mixup.

The problem is not seen because it is dark inside. You don't want to look there. If I am able to look at that, then of course the cloud will disappear. Instead I look where it is convenient for me to look, without observing whether the problem is there or comes from there. We go round and round. I like this person and since you are not fond of that person, I hate you. I have still not solved my problem, I have only complicated it further.

Then through satsang or God's grace, guru's grace, or through what the Yoga Vasistha might call accidental coincidence, you discover that he cannot be my trouble, something else is my trouble. Accidentally you wake up to the real source of the problem. It is me, it is within me. Let me work that out. One great help in working this out is the understanding that I was there before this problem came into my life and I will probably be there after it has gone. I wasn't born with a cigarette in my mouth and hopefully I won't die with one in my mouth. I was there before this relationship of

love or hate developed - both these, raga dvesha, are exactly the same - and I'll continue to be there even after this relationship comes to an end. Now, where is the problem? Suddenly I realise that there is a craving and that craving itself causes it.

Whenever I think of something as an object of pleasure or enjoyment and therefore desirable, a contact is made. When the psychological contact is made, whether the object is present or not, a craving arises. At that point I am the craver, I don't see it. It is not as though the craving is something away from me, that I am independent of this craving. This is what one of those children in Perth said very beautifully. "Why don't you realise the earth is spinning on its own axis?" "Because you are not only on it, you are identifying yourself with it, you are the earth." Therefore you are completely unaware of the fact that the earth is spinning.

When that craving or the fulfilment of the craving is frustrated, you fly into a temper, or you hate. Whenver there is an infatuated love, there is a corresponding hate somewhere; it's universal, it must be there. If you are deeply attached to vegetarianism, you hate everybody else who eats meat. And so we go on and on, never for a moment stopping to think that the problem is in me, not in anybody else. The suffering is not in the person whom I love, and not in the other person whom I hate in consequence - it is in me.

The whole process can be reversed easily. The clue is given to us towards the end of the third chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.

indriyāṇi parāṇy āhur indriyebhyaḥ paraṁ manaḥ
manasas tu parā buddhir yo buddheḥ paratas tu saḥ (III.42)

Of course the senses are very powerful. When do they become so? When the habit has been formed, when the groove has been cut. Then of course the water flows automatically along that groove, which means you have an irresistable temptation. I have heard of at least one friend who even resolved quite a number of times to keep away from alcohol, but he could not.

If he even drove within half a mile of a pub, from there something took over. He didn't realise that he was going in at all, and he didn't come out, he was carried out! That's it.

Even there one realises, all is not lost, because there are moments of clarity. That is, I am drawn into the temptation, which means there are moments when I am not drawn, when I am not craving. This applies to human relationship also. We may be drawn to each other tremendously but I realise that when you are absent or I am absent from your company, there are hours and hours or days and months when I don't think of you. What happened at that time? If I can get hold of that this time, I would actually see the sequence of events described in the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita: How I begin to think of it and the moment I think of it the whole conflagration starts. It is because we don't pay attention to the valley, that we are always caught up in the crest of this temptation. If however you wait for some time till you experience the trough which is natural, you will see that you are not craving all the time, whoever you are, however mad you are. In this trough I wake myself up and become intensely aware of this cravingless state. That feels good. Of course, the other enjoyment - a glass of whisky - also felt good. But here there is no craving at all, there is no problem.

There is a risky practice here. In Swami Nihsreyasananda's words what I am going to describe right now is fit only for heroes; a bit of inner strength is necessary. While still in the trough can you dramatise within yourself the arising of the craving? Visualise yourself in some nice company and having a nice time. Then perhaps you can also see the whole thing objectively. You are deliberately injecting into your mind the trigger that usually sent you spinning. While doing so you are wide awake and therefore, for example, resolutely avoiding getting up and opening the fridge or the bar. I am merely dramatising the whole thing within myself to see how a craving arises, how it reaches its peak and comes down into the trough again. That needs a bit of strength.

Otherwise you keep in the trough experience without allowing the mental equilibrium to be disturbed. Then naturally because of the groove that has been cut, the craving must arise,

probably the next time you come into close proximity with the object of temptation, whether it is a thing or a person. If you are very cautious there, you can see the craving beginning and can immediately say, "Aha, you are the trouble." When the craving is absent there is no distress, no trouble. Why not keep there?

Krishna points the way. Naturally when these habit patterns are formed, the senses seem to be terribly powerful. No doubt, but you have something in you which is more powerful - the mind. It is the mind that really forms these grooves, thinking constantly of the object of pleasure. Why does the mind form this groove and not that one? Something within you has judged this to be pleasant. That is the buddhi. The buddhi is the determining faculty and the mind works in the light provided by the buldhi, on the determination of the buddhi. So Krishna says, "Look, look, look a little bit deeper; you yourself have decided that this is desirable. You then desire it and then you suffer." What happens if you switch off the whole thing? Do you see the fun here?

You can easily take these three or four steps back and yet there is one more step. You can reverse this whole process, because beyond that buddhi or the discriminating power is He. Here the ego is not mentioned at all because ego is something which arises in the buddhi itself, as a reflection. So instead you take one step further back from the buddhi; there you are in Him, in God. Viewed from that point the whole thing looks silly and simple. The habit that was causing a lot of distress drops away - it is not even dropped - and a new habit is formed.

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The Mystery of The Soul

om saha nāvavatu saha nau bhunaktu saha vīryam karavāvahai tejasvināvadhītam astu mā vidviṣāvahai om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ (May He protect us both (the teacher and the taught) together

(by revealing knowledge). May He protect us both (by vouchsafing the results of knowledge). May we attain vigour together. Let what we study be invigorating. May we not cavil at each other. Om, peace, peace, peace!

How does one understand? For instance we three are sitting on the platform. You are sitting under us. And if you stand down there, you will be understanding us - standing under. Where is the mind? In the head. That's what we think. So what is done up there can not be understanding. And what is under the head? The heart. And so if it is possible for us to open our hearts for this half hour to be in love with each other, then it is possible to bring about an understanding and that is why the prayer was offered in the beginning.

As a matter of fact one of the members of your staff sent a rather long question concerning what is called the soul. What is the relationship between the soul, and the ultimate being and what happens in that relationship during what the Hindus call transmigration. Let us approach it from the simple point of view of children, of students - I am also a student.

If you have no ideas already about this, where will you start? First of all I would start to question why does this question arise at all? Why does the mind look for a thing called an ultimate being? The answer I'm sure you will agree is,"Because of one terrible factor inlife which we call death".

When I first came to Mauritius most of you had not been born. If some of you come to me singly, I would ask you a very simple question. Let's say your date of birth is the 1st of July. Where were you on your last birthday? You know where you were - in your seaside cottage or at home. Where did you celebrate your birthday six years ago? Probably you were in France or in England. And if you are, let's say, 12 years old, where were you 12 years ago on your birthday? In the hospital, next to your mother. Where were you 15 years ago on the 1st of July? Perhaps you reply: "I was nowhere." My God, that's a fantastic answer. Could you also say that it is possible that last year I was nowhere? When you say "I was" - I'm talking plain simple English - the "I who was" had to be somewhere. "I was where" is the question. You can't say, "I was nowhere". You weren't born. Now that is where the whole problem begins.

I was in bed in the nursing home with my mother 12 years ago. Before that I was a foetus in the mother. And before that?

Let's say you have a mango. Where did you get that mango fruit from? From the tree. How did the tree grow? From the seed. Where did you get that seed? From the tree. So, there seems to be an apparently beginningless beginning. When you grow up you can go much further than this into the analysis of the molecules, the atoms and the energy that is contained in the atoms and so on. For the present we are only concerned with this simple problem.

If I am asked where I was 60 years ago I would probably answer similarly as you have done. Instead of saying "I was nowhere" I would have been a bit more honest and said, "I do not know". You are young and so tremendously optimistic and tremendously dynamic, aggressive and so you say "I was nowhere". I would have very honestly but more humbly said"I do not know". Someone might ask me, "Where do you hope to be in the next few years Swami?" I might say in Mauritius. Then, if you ask me "After 20 years". Then I would reply not that "I would be nowhere", but "I do not know".

Now inbetween these two punctuation marks - one called birth and the other called death - we seem to be - is that right? I am. That nobody will deny. I think I know I am, or I think I am or I know I am. If I do not know what I was before this first punctuation mark and where I will be after the second punctuation mark, what's going to happen to me? There is a being now which is not ultimate in as much as this being which is sitting here and talking to you will cease to exist. Therefore I am looking for an ultimate being.

What is the relationship of this being with that one? The framer of this question has used the words ultimate being and so I go on with the simple word God. But please remember God is a word. I used the word mango. You heard the word mango and if you love the word mango, probably your mouth started salivation, but you would still not taste the mango. If you have a mango in your hand and put it into your mouth, you'll taste it. So between the word and the fact or the truth, there is a big difference.. God is a word. Why do I want to believe in this ultimate being or God? I know that

this being that I am seems to have no permanent existence. You must have seen babies at home or around within a week or so after birth. They're tiny, tiny, tiny. That's what your mother gave birth to - you were so beautiful and so charming, so delicate, so fragile. Now some of these boys have moustaches, some of these girls are grooming themselves - great young men and women. Where did you acquire all this mass? Not from your mother or father, but from the food that you ate. As a matter of fact even the newborn baby is nothing but well processed food eaten by the mother. Now is that the being I am talking about, the personality I'm talking about when I am talking about my personality? Please remember very often we confuse the personality with the body. He has a magnificent personality means he has a beautiful, handsome body. I'm sure you mean something else also.

If I understand what this being is, then I might also understand the relationship this being has with the ultimate being. Though this body is made of food, it is still possible that this body is me so that I might be able to agree with her that 60 years ago I was nowhere and 60 years later I will be nowhere also. When she said 20 years ago she was nowhere, what she really meant was that this body was not in existence 20 years ago. When I call myself Swami Venkatesananda, am I referring to this body? Often we do, this is the tragedy. I'm beginning to wonder now whether what is called the personality is not the body but seems to live in this body.

If so, what is it that lives in this body? When you see a dead body, once again you begin to wonder, what was there in that body which has now left it? Life has left the body so that it is no longer functioning the way it used to. It does function in a way, it decomposes; but it is not living. So life is fundamental. Life is ultimate in comparison to this physical body.

Whereas this physical body composed of food changes, life is ultimate in comparison. Do you know what life means, what a living being means? We use millions of words. I once heard a brilliant scientist in India who talked to us. He was a deeply religious man and he said, "People often demand when a religious man talks of God, 'Show us what god is, otherwise we

won't believe , describe fully what god is'. I am a scientist and if someone were to ask me,'Dr. Krishnan, what is electricity?' I would have to answer,'Electricity, my friend, is electricity.'" You may show its functions but you cannot show "This is electricity". Even so we are unable to demonstrate or show what prana or life means. We know living beings, how they function, how this life makes me function, but we don't know what life is.

The problem here is ignorance. I am a living being, a living personality and I say I don't know who I am. It is not life that says "I don't know" but the living being. Once again there is a puzzle. "My god, I don't know, but you must know, life itself must know." We see again that this ultimate being which is the source of life, which is life itself is also all knowledge, perfect knowledge, perfect intelligence. Then we look at this dead body again. It doesn't know that it is dead. In that dead body, there is neither life nor intelligence as you and I see it to be. Therefore we think that there was a soul in that body and that soul was all life and intelligence. It is that soul which is in me, in this body, which lives and is able to think, to know, to reason, and to understand. That is the soul even now.

From there on one can adopt any view one likes. Even if you ask me to describe it in terms of Hinduism I would still fumble because there are as many schools of thought in Hinduism as there are religions in the world. There are any number of speculations. I'll give you one view point that I like. I want to emphasise though that this is not the only view point even of Hinduism. It's quite simple. The soul that dwells in this body and which at some time decides to leave this body is life and that soul is pure intelligence. It is because of that soul that I am living and that I am able to think and speak. It does not have a form, it doesn't have a limitation, it is not limited to this body. It does not have male-female characteristics. It does not even have animal-human characteristics. It is life - it is intelligence. It is, it was, and it will ever be. It is very much like water vapour in the world; you have water vapour everywhere, even in the deserts. If you look at a cloud which is about to rain, you see there a mass of water vapour and yet

it is homogeneous, it is one. In a few minutes it begins to rain, the whole cloud does not come down like a lake but it comes down as individual droplets. That is the mystery of nature. In the same way I might see that altogether, all the living beings in the world together constitute this ultimate being called God. We are small beings like one of those raindrops falling from the cloud down onto the earth, once again to evaporate and go up.

I would say that the soul is a cell in the body of god. Just as your body has billions of cells, each apparently performing an independent function, even so, all of us, all the living beings in the world are cells in the body of god. Each cell is called a soul. Till this understanding is brought about, we undergo changes like rain. As long as we do not have this knowledge or understanding, we go from one form to another, not necessarily one body to another, till the inner purity is achieved and the soul is reabsorbed in the ultimate being.

Question: Where was the soul before you were born and what happens to it afterwards?
Answer: Where was that drop of water before it rained? In the cloud. Cloud is a word but it is still moisture around the earth isn't it. Don't look at it as a small piece of cloud. The whole atmosphere around the earth is full of moisture and it is everywhere. Somehow at some stage that droplet separates itself from the cloud and drops down. That is how I understand even the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. Eve is what the Hindus call Jiva. They called the male counterpart Adam and the Hindus called it Atma. Where were these? They were there everywhere. At a certain point this one atom of existence, one atom of life assumes this form and it says, "I do not know what I was". It starts functioning as an independent living being till this ignorance is given up and along with that all the sinful tendencies, wickedness, evil is also given up. Then when there is purity of heart, God's light is purely reflected in that pure heart and in that there is knowledge and there is no more going or coming.
Question: How is it that if there is a god, there is so much evil in this world?
Answer: As a matter of fact it is because we are so wicked

that we think there must be somebody who is good and therefore god. I don't see much difference between the two words good and god. Good minus god is O (zero) which means between good and god there is no difference. Have you ever been naughty, wicked, or angry with your schoolmate or bluffed somebody? For sometime after that, there is no peace at heart. If you lose your temper with somebody, if you scold somebody, if you are rude to somebody, you can't sleep. When you are wicked, when you have done something wicked, something deep within you rebels and says, "No, I shouldn't have done that". There must be something which is greater than my individual personality which is not involved in this ignorance, in my wickedness. It is in a state of ignorance of god that I, the individual, fall into error and when this ignorance goes, that wickedness drops away or after the wickedness drops away, the heart becomes pure and God is reflected in it.

Question: What about the mind?

Answer: The mind is a confusion between the soul and the body. It's the mind which says the soul is the body. Do you know the distinction between the soul and the body? The soul is pure intelligence in which there is no evil at all. The body is pure potatoes in which there is also no evil. Even though I have been saying all through this talk that the soul is distinct from the body, if you cut me, if you hit me, I'll cry because in ignorance there is the confusion that the soul is the body. So one has to resolve that confusion and only then your question can be properly answered. Who is angry - the soul or the body? First this confusion should be resolved. Obviously it is not the body that is angry. You are never angry when you are fast asleep. When I am dead I won't be angry with you at all. You can ask me the rudest question you want, I'll still smile. There is a confusion now and it is the confusion that creates all these problems.

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The Reflecting Mirror

Meditation is not something extraordinary. It is the ability to pay attention completely and totally whether you

are sitting and listening to a talk on yoga or you are in a classroom listening to a lecture on what Mauritius looks like. When someone stands here and talks to you of what Mauritius looks like, what is your reaction? Do you turn to look out of the window? Can the mind or the attention be totally focussed on any one thing without being distracted? If you can avoid that distraction you are in meditation.

I think you have some idea of yoga already and it is that idea that prevents you from knowing what yoga is. If you want to see the wall and the shadow of my hand is on it, are you seeing the wall? Obviously not. You see the shadow of my hand obstructing the vision. What would you do in order to see the wall? Can you remove that shadow? No? Then, you can't see the wall. If the shadow is removed you can see the wall, but how do you remove it? I have to remove that shadow and yet the shadow cannot be removed because it is not real. It is not like this shrub which can be pulled away from the wall.

Can you explain to me something which is, but not real? How can something <u>be</u> and yet be not <u>real</u>? You chanted that prayer just now. "From the unreal lead me to the real." In the very expression of this sentence, there is a problem. Can you show me something which <u>is</u> unreal? If it is, it's not unreal. If unreal, it is not. What do I mean by something which is, but which is unreal? How can something which is, be unreal? How can something unreal, be?

I have to observe and as I observe I see something. I am not contradicting the famous prayer but I am only giving you another point of view. We are not moving from the unreal to the real but we are examining what is seen as if it is real. Have you ever looked at your face in a mirror? What do you see? Your face? The reflection of your face? Do you see something in the mirror or not - whether it is a reflection or your face? I see something in my pocket - it's paper. I can tear it up or give it to you. Can you similarly take that thing out of the mirror and give it to me? Why not? If it is there, it can be taken out, you can handle it. Would you call whatever you see in the mirror (whether you call it your face or your reflection of your face) real or unreal? If you say it is real, then you can give it to me. If it is unreal, then I am going to take you to task, you are seeing a ghost.

When you talk of the real and the unreal, what are you doing? You have your eyes open, you are looking at the mirror. Does the mirror or whatever is in the mirror come and tell you, "I am a reflection", or "I am unreal", or "I am real"? What is happening at that moment when you are looking at the mirror? A thought arises in your mind - not in the mirror. "Ah, I see." And then another thought arises. "I see a reflection in the mirror". You begin to think, "I think" - and then you think that you are seeing something in the mirror. The mirror or what is in the mirror does not say, "I am", or "I am real", or "I am unreal".

So, in order to know what is real, one has to go beyond thinking. If one does not do so, an error arises. You begin to say, "I see my face in the mirror", and somebody questions you, "Do you?" You are puzzled. Or you say, "I see a reflection in the mirror" and if someone asks you, "Is it true", you are puzzled again. If I ask you another question you may be even more puzzled. Have you ever seen a mirror? Can you look at a mirror without a reflection? When you are looking at the reflection, you are not looking at the mirror. Is it in the mirror, on the mirror, or above the mirror? Are you looking at the mirror or at the reflection in the mirror? If you are honest, you can only honestly answer that question in a roundabout way. The swami is standing here and you see him "there". You know that he is not there; he is only here. Then you begin to question, "How is it, that though the swami is standing here, I see him there. "Ah, it is a reflection, and therefore there must be a mirror there." Because we are so used to this phenomenon called mirror all this takes place in one fifth of a second and you don't realise the truth. No one has seen the mirror. You only see the reflection. Now if you put these two things together you realise something very beautiful and you have understood all that there is to be understood in regard to yoga.

I cannot see what is unreal because the unreal does not exist. If it exists, it is not unreal, it is real. I see something and something in me tells me that it is not, that it is a reflection, an imagination, a phantasy, a thought-process. That something is seen by whom? By me - we'll come back to that later. You look at the mirror, but the mirror

is not seen, only the reflection is seen. The reflection is seen as if it is in the mirror. You are still looking at it. To me still looking at it means you are still and looking at it. You are still physically and mentally and looking at it. What are you seeing? The mirror is not there, the face is not there. I don't know what reflections means, it's a word or a thought that arises in the mind. When you are still, that thing that obstructed the vision, the shadow that was there, preventing correct understanding, correct knowledge of what is, is gone. There is no shadow of thought. When the thought is not there, you are still, the mind is still. Would you still see the reflection or would you see the reality, the truth? You won't see the mirror, and therefore what is called unreal, or the medium in which the unreal is reflected (in Vedanta that is called maya). It is something which appears to be but which does not exist. It is a mere reflecting medium.

As reflecting media we are all there. I am reflected in you, you are reflected in me, we are all being reflected all the time in one another. The image falls on the eye and is taken through the iris of the pupil and the pupil turns the whole image upside down. You are told that the brain in you is really seeing the upside down image of the swami which is formed on your retina. You are not seeing me at all. As far as you are concerned I am not standing here, I am in you. We are all images in each other.

Now the question arises. When the whole world is seen in me, is there a reality other than the intelligence in which it is reflected? I don't exist except to the extent that this image is formed by you within yourself. Our friend suggested that this man standing here is a swami. If someone else who didn't like me, met me, he would probably say this man is a crook, a hoax, and a hypocrite. Maybe he is right, maybe the other man is right. Maybe nobody is right. Supposing I walked into a zoo and unknowingly happened to enter a lion's cage. The lion is hungry and it looks at me. Would it look at me as a swami who is a respectable man or as a nice breakfast? So, what is real and what is unreal?

This is where the yogi's yoga-sadhana or the practice of yoga starts. If you understand this, probably your whole life

will undergo a revolution; there will be a complete change in your relationship with one another. Our relationships are corrupted, polluted by assuming that the other person is 'my friend' or 'my enemy' etc. All these assumptions get a violent shake. Is there such a relationship? I am seeing him as 'my friend'. Is that real? That's where you begin to question. You are not taking anything for granted. You are not saying that this world is either real or unreal. There is an appearance and I want to know what it is, what the truth concerning this is.

If this investigation is not there, there is no yoga. Even in what is very prestigiously called hatha yoga there is also this same factor. This is what yoga means. "There seems to be an appearance - what is the reality?" Without dismissing anything as unreal, the yogi goes from one reality to a greater reality. That is what the prayer means: "Lead me from what I have taken without question to be the reality, that is the unreal - the imagination, the reflection, the appearance - to the reality." You have taken the body to be absolutely real, to be yourself. You are not even looking at this body but only at this shirt. You don't see anything called"Swami Venkatesananda" here, you see a long orange shirt, with a head, two hands and two feet sticking out. In the same way I say "I am standing here". What is standing here? Now I am beginning to investigate the body. What is it made of? However beautiful or ugly the body may be, it is merely twice recycled garbage. The garbage is first recycled into vegetables and then it is recycled into the body. The hatha yogi does not want to neglect the body because it is there. Whether it is real or unreal, you do not see me as the bag of potatoes but as a person, as a swami.

When you say "I see him in front of me", you are using a wrong expression which is equal to your saying, "I see a reflection in the mirror". In the same way when I say "I am here, I am standing here" the reality is not expressed. The appearance is expressed and that appearance is taken to be the reality. You don't say, "Ah, the body is unreal, throw it away". You can't throw it away. If it is unreal, what do you throw away? Thus, working with this apparent reality

or the appearance, you gradually proceed towards the understanding of that which is, the intelligence which is able to observe, that becomes aware of the thinking process - that is the reality.

Go back to the mirror. When you stand there, you suddenly realise I am not seeing the mirror at all. I am seeing the reflection, but the reflection is not a reality in itself, it is not a thing that exists in itself, by itself. It is only an apparent reality, an appearance. There is no reality called mirror because you have not seen the mirror without reflection. Then you realise that it is not true to say that your face alone is real because there is a reflection 'there', you are seeing something there. Suddenly there is the realisation that the two are really one. The two have become one as it were, because the two had never been two. There has never been a thing other than this face, neither the mirror nor the reflection; but in the mirror a reflection of this face was apparently seen - a reflection and the reality.

When it comes to living,suddenly we create complications. I exist only because you think; that is, 'this' is reflected in your mind. I am neither your enemy nor your friend, neither a swami nor a bag of potatoes. I don't exist as an outsider - the world does not exist outside of yourself. If this small girl here holds that big mirror and stands close to it, the whole mirror will reflect only her face. If you take it upstairs or on top of the church tower and hold it there, it will reflect the whole of Curepipe.

In the same way the mind is capable of reflecting individuals as well as the entire universe. All the people who are involved in your life as well as the entire world are within you. It is that which is in you that sanctions, that gives them the validity. Previously you used to consider so-and-so as your friend, and some one else as not your friend. When you realise that all these things are in you,you may still use these words. You may say that this is the left eye and the other is the right eye, even though there is no distinction between them. They are both equally vital parts of your body. In the same way, if you realise that the person whom you consider good and the person whom you consider evil or bad are both parts of you, born of you, non different from you, then

those distinctions go away. You may still use words like happiness and unhappiness, good luck and bad luck, but in your own mind, in your own heart, in your own understanding, in your own intelligence those distinctions have disappeared.

There is a sutra in the vedas which describes the creation and mentions that "God created all these, both what is true and what is false, and He entered into them all." When this intelligence enters into all these, what is considered unreal becomes real, the appearance is seen to be an appearance of the real. The appearance is no longer separate from the real, but the appearance is seen, or realised as a reflection of the real. At that moment yoga is born.

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Natural Action

Talks on the Third Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita

I

vyāmiśreṇe 'va vākyena buddhiṁ mohayasī 'va me
tad ekaṁ vada niścitya yena śreyo 'ham āpnuyām (III.2)

The student, who is Arjuna, asks the teacher Krishna, this question "Tell me, what is śreyo?" This word has been interpreted in various ways, but let us use the word "right". "What is the right thing to do in any given situation?" One must arrive at the point where one begins to ask this question within oneself. There is always a tendency to answer that question very quickly - "Well, ask father and mother, or ask a priest, they are omniscient, they will answer all our questions". And so we go to these great people, asking them questions like, "Shall I go to England or not?" or " My daughter is getting old you know, when will she get married?" Most likely the wise person is not able to answer that sort of question even for himself. If he knew all the answers, wouldn't he be a very prosperous and happy man? He is himself puzzled and unhappy, and you are going to him in the hope that he will solve your unhappiness! It's not possible.

So the question has to arise in one's mind and there

should be no anxiety to answer that question quickly. One should not make a hasty decision. I don't know what this word "decision" really means. I know what incision means: To cut. So the word decision must also come from the same root - cutting into two perhaps. When you make a decision you have cut that silly thing into two and it is quite possible that they won't join again - so be a little more careful. In other words don't let impulse govern the decision. That may be a wrong approach. Take your time. Find the answer in the way in which Krishna suggests. This method is what we are going to discuss.

Arjuna had suggested a certain course of action, based on the prevailing concept or philosophy. That concept or philosophy prevails even now all over the world - the concept of karma. We are not suggesting that this theory or concept itself is wrong, but there is something else. The concept of karma is quite simple. Every farmer knows it and if you are a student of physics you know it too. It is also found in most of the scriptures: "As you sow,so shall you reap". I am not sure of that, so I have slightly modified it to say, "As you sow so shall it grow". After all, I don't know if I want to reap it. I don't know if I will reap it. You plant a mango tree and it comes up, it's not inevitable that you will be here to reap the fruit. But this much is inevitable, that if you put a mango seed there, you are a hundred percent certain that a Banyan tree will not grow out of it.

Starting from the concept of karma, some people concluded that we should not do anything at all, we should not sow any seed because it may lead to complications. Similarly, you have the law of action-reaction in physics which states that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Now I am miserable and unhappy. According to this law, this unhappiness arises from an action done previously, and because the reaction is said to be equal and opposite, the action performed earlier on was to make myself happy. I did something to make myself happy then, and the reaction has come back to me in the form of unhappiness. I see this. Or rather, I don't know if I see this, but I think I see it. Afraid to make the next move, I don't do anything. If you don't want unhappiness, don't commence anything at all - don't start anything, don't do anything , renounce it, keep quiet.

Krishna suggests that that may not be the right approach. He starts the teaching in the third chapter with a beautiful declaration:

na karmanām anārambhān naiskarmyaṁ puruṣo 'śnute
na ca saṁnyasanād eva siddhiṁ samadhigacchati (III.4)

"Don't think that by merely not commencing an action, by not engaging yourself in action, you will escape from all action and reaction, because the roots are elsewhere." The roots of action are not found in <u>you</u>. You cannot say, "I am not going to do anything from now on", for that also is an action. Idleness is also an action. So Krishna says:

na hi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt
kāryate hy avaśaḥ karma sarvaḥ prakṛtijair guṇaiḥ (III.5)

"You are a living being, you cannot refuse to participate in life."

I think one has to study that statement very carefully. Krishna is not suggesting here that you should not refuse to participate in life. He is pointing out that such inaction is impossible. He is making a statement of the following nature. He is not saying that there is water which can be boiled, but that you should not boil it. He is saying that water cannot be dehydrated. You can dehydrate milk and turn it into milk powder, you can dehydrate potatoes and make them into powder, but not water. I must see that it is not possible for me to do <u>nothing</u>. Doing means doing something. You may not work, you may not study, but you may sit idly - sitting is an action! It will have its own reactions.

What is right action? We shall find the answer not by refraining from participating in the activities of life, in the flow of life, but by finding where right action commences, how it arises. Later on in the same chapter Krishna describes how life flows on and in the flow of life action arises.

sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā puro 'vāca prajāpatiḥ
anena prasaviṣyadhvam eṣa vo 'stv iṣṭakāmadhuk (III.10)

(The Creator, having in the beginning created mankind

together with sacrifice, said: "By this shall ye propagate: Let this be the milch cow of your desires.")

This is how life has been made to flow. And Krishna uses a very beautiful expression:

yajñārthāt karmano 'nyatra loko 'yam karmabandhanah

tadartham karma kaunteya muktasangah samācara (III.9)

"If you live in such a way that your whole life is one of worship, you are not bound and there is no problem." It is not a question of deciding what is right action.

karma brahmodbhavam viddhi brahmā 'ksarasamudbhavam

tasmāt sarvagatam brahma nityam yajñe pratisthitam (III.15)

It is a question of finding the source of action; what makes me do this?

Consider what this yajna or havan, the fire ceremony means. You collect all sorts of things and pour them into the fire, reciting "Om swaha, Om swaha". In fifteen minutes your havan is over and you go away thinking that everything is alright now, without understanding the significance of it. "Swaha" - I am trying to destroy swartha. It's like the French word "soi" which means self. Ha means destroy it, offer it, sacrifice it. So swaha means the sacrifice of the self. The real meaning of the word "sacrifice" is to make it sacred.

Now in the Hindu tradition you sacrifice ghee and food grains into the sacred fire. If you are intelligent this thought or feeling must also arise in you; that I am not only throwing ghee and food grains into the fire, but I am also throwing ghee and food grains into something else, into my mouth, where there is gastric fire. Let us look at the two different forms of sacrifice. In both cases there is a fire which consumes what is being offered. Here there is a fire, which you can see, and there is a fire which you cannot see though, you feel its heat in the body. What is offered into this havan-kunda, the religious fire which sits in front of you, is at once reduced to sacred ashes, clean, pure, and beautiful. You take them and put them onto your forehead. That is visible.

What happens to the ghee that is poured into this other digestive fire? It becomes the most unsacred thing in the world, the body, rubbish, filth. It takes a lot of imagination to understand that the food grains that have been poured into this body have been sacrificed; they have not become sacred at all! If you have any doubt, ask your cosmetician. They sell all sorts of deoderants on the understanding that the body exudes filth.

If the food is offered into the body as a sacrifice, how must I live so that this may also be a sacrifice? One has to discover this oneself. Why is it that when these things are offered into the gastric fire they become so filthy? I must answer that question myself and understand it. Then it is possible for me to live in such a way that the ghee which is poured into this digestive fire may also become sacred? If that energy is also utilized properly then that also could become sacred. If my whole life is lived as a sacrifice, then it is possible for all the food that is consumed to be regarded as sacrifice.

Krishna suggests: "Regard your whole life as sacrifice". That is, life itself, every action, should be made sacred. Is that possible? You think, "I am doing this", and when you think that, naturally there is an understanding or a perception of a motivation. "I am doing this because...", because I want to get some pleasure or some profit out of life. Some of you are doing business here and we are doing business elsewhere. Such statements are found in all scriptures; don't think that I am only belittling this statement in the Bible. They point out that if you do some charity here you will get a reward in heaven, and then you will be born a very rich man in the next birth. As the Bible puts it, "If you give, it shall be given back to you a hundredfold." There is a similar tradition amongst the Hindus, that if you feed a holy man, it is equivalent to feeding five hundred people. So it is a very simple and economical way. When you give in charity to a poor man observe your own mind and see what you are doing. Can you visualise yourself doing this charity because the Bible says it will be returned to you a hundredfold? Are you doing charity at all then? This man in front of you has completely disappeared, instead you are seeing money

pouring from somewhere. Such an action is hypocrisy.

That is the danger in all teaching. In order to promote charity and goodness, one has to say something like: "Be good, you will go to heaven." The moment you are told that, you're not doing good at all, you are only busy going to heaven. That action is impure. It is not right action; you are not even acting in the proper spirit. You have a motive. That motivation builds expectation, hope, fear, disappointment, despair and frustration. Outwardly it may appear to be wonderful; you may be doing phenomenal charity, fantastic social work, but it is absolutely useless if it arises from a motive. Motive means selfishness. Is there an action which is not linked to such motivation, which is right in itself, whose rightness or wrongness does not depend upon a result?

It is not like an exam, where you only know if you have done well or not by the result. I can't do that in life. (I wish you wouldn't do it in the exam either.) When someone gives me a drink, how do I know whether it is poison or coconut water? You are telling me, "Well drink it, we'll see". I must know right now. "By their fruits you shall know them" - but by then it's too late. I want to know as I continue to live, as life flows on, that this is right action. Some of you may be students. If you write an exam anxious to pass, you will fail. The anxiety kills you, destroys your initiative, your intelligence, your energy, your zeal - everything. The more anxious you are, the more certain it is that you will fail.

So, I am not certain at all that the action is right action or wrong action, but I am observing to see where it arises. Does it arise in instinct? (Instinct in the usual sense of the word.) What is instinct? It's possible to misunderstand this instinct and confuse it with what we might call spontaneous action. Spontaneous action is possible only for a little baby, but it is very difficult for you and me. For instance, I was brought up in an orthodox Brahmin family and we wouldn't even sip from a glass, we used to pour from above our head. You bite something and say, "Oh, it's lovely, won't you have a bit?" Now between the two of us there is a problem. To you it looks like a good action - "I took a bit of the cake, it's so delicious and so instinctively I offer it to you." "Won't you have

a bit?" Instinctively I shrink from it. It's a good case in point. The action is not right action. It is not spontaneously wishing to offer someone a piece of this cake, but rather it is a sort of instinctual action. That is, there is conditioning or training in it. There is blindness in it. Instinct is always blind. It may be rooted in the body. The body instinctively turns away from something which is painful to it; or it may be rooted in the mind which is corrupted by prejudice.

Again we go back to this question of where does this action arise? Does it arise in instinct? Then it is mechanical. The intelligence is not working at all, it is blindly following a tradition. Does it arise in emotion? Then it has got a motivation. Does it arise in the mind, thought-process? Then it is calculating, it is working towards a result, a goal and must lead to frustration. Is there something other than all this from which action arises? Krishna suggests that there is. He also suggests that all these various things, instinct, emotion, thought-process, can all be grouped into this one single thing - "I".

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II

What is the source of action? There is a beautiful passage in the Bhagavad Gita:

annād bhavanti bhūtāni parjanyād annasaṁbhavaḥ (III.14)

Yesterday we discussed that we - in the sense of the body - are made of food. If there is no rain, there is no food. These two statements are obvious. They are followed by other statements which are not so obvious:

yajñād bhavati parjanyo yajñaḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ (III.14)

Krishna tells us there that rain falls because of yajna. What is yajna? In the havan ceremony you pour something into the fire saying; "May I live without selfishness, may my actions be not motivated by selfishness, may I offer into the sacred fire, called the world, every one of my actions as an

offering. This is yajna. If this is done, there is rain-fall. So Krishna seems to take us from the obvious to the not-so-obvious, and finally to the subtle principle. The body, the gross, physical thing, is always obvious; the non-physical thing, the me, the mind, the spirit, is not obvious. That the rain-fall is dependent upon our spirit of self-sacrifice is not so obvious. That we don't see what makes rain fall does not entitle us to doubt this statement. There may be some truth in the fact that it is the spirit in which we live that governs rain-fall or sunshine and so on. What is unselfishness if it does not spring from action? Unselfishness is seen in one's action. The spirit of unselfishness needs action for its manifestation. If there is no action one does not know in what spirit one lives.

karma brahmodbhavaṁ viddhi brahmā 'kṣarasamudbhavam
tasmāt sarvagataṁ brahma nityaṁ yajñe pratisthitam
(III.15)

The literal translation of this phrase is:"Remember that action springs from God; Brahman is the all-pervading essence". Brahman is another synonym for God, or God is another word used to denote what Brahman stands for here. Does action spring from the thinking instrument or mind? The mind always creates division. Or, the mind works in terms of division based on the past and the future. If this action, called speaking, arises from the mind then it is not right action. Or this action, if it is not in the thinking sphere, may be an emotional thing. You are doing it only because it gives you a nice feeling. Or, while the action flows, you raise a nice feeling within yourself. In this action which takes place inevitably in life, the heart or the feeling comes up and says, "Ah, it feels good." That action is wrong action, that attitude is a wrong attitude, Action being inevitable, it is a motivation or the other interferring factors that are deadly.

There are two points of view here concerning action: One view is that everything is predetermined; the other is that you have the freedom of choice. One can look at it from both points of view. Whether I have a freedom of choice or whether the action is inevitable, I do not know. But I know this much, that action is inevitable - life is motion and action. I must

find out where action springs from. Is there interference with this action by thought or feeling? If these two are kept aside, then action arises and happens.

You have probably used these three words together: thinking, feeling and willing. I don't like the last word so I changed it to "thinking, feeling and living". Where did that action come from? Surely from living. Can we prove this? No, but one can live this life without thought and emotion interfering with action. When these two are kept strictly away, then life flows on. Such a life is free from selfishness. When the self arises, it begins to think, calculate; it is caught up in its own emotions. When action is not interfered with by these two then the self is not there, and that is unselfish action.

In that action there is no reaction, except to the extent that if the palm tree falls, there is a sound. If while you are driving along the road, a stone rolls down the hillside and falls in front of you, you don't blame the mountain. If I throw that stone in front of you, you blame me. You recognise that the mountain has no ego. Only egoistic actions are followed by the reaction. Only as long as I am holding on to the action does it bounce back towards me, because the "me" is there, thinking or feeling: "I am doing this".

prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ
ahaṁkāravimūḍhātmā kartā 'ham iti manyate (III.27)

Who is it that is sitting here and speaking? Who is this Swami Venkatesananda? It is natural for speech to happen, yet if only a little nerve in the throat goes out of order then Swami Venkatesananda would be speechless. Why do I say: "I am doing this"? It is the throat, the voice, the brain-centre, the brain-cells that are speaking, and if there is something else, it is God that is speaking. It is the idea that arises that "I am the speaker" that then becomes the speaker, the ego. This ego is totally uninvolved in the action. The action has nothing whatsoever to do with the idea of the self. It is not as though, if I think I am the speaker I become the speaker. I don't. Whether you are a wise person and you realise that action springs from life or God, or you are a stupid person who thinks that I am the doer,

action always springs from God.

It is God who sits in the hearts of all beings and it is He who makes everybody do whatever is being done, who makes them revolve helplessly. You will be made to do. Don't think, "I will do" or "I will not do". These stupid ideas and great feelings are only ideas and great feelings,not action. If you don't want to use the word "God", then use "life". If the inner intelligence is able to detect the ego-interference, in the form of thoughts, ideas, emotions or feelings, then life flows on. In that life there is no problem.

A few minutes ago I quoted a verse (B.G. Chapt. III, verse 27). "All actions are done by nature". What do we mean by "nature"?. There is unfortunately an error here. I don't know how this corruption arose. You go to the seaside and look at nature. You have not explained whose nature it is, and you excluded yourself, even humanity. If you understand by the word "nature" all that is natural, then you don't commit the blunder of excluding yourself as humanity. The human being, being natural, is also part of this nature. Suddenly you find an extraordinary new attitude developing within you. Do not all actions spring from nature? Are not all actions natural? Everything is natural. Natural life does not mean life which is monotonous. It means the recognition that whatever is happening is as it should be. The recognition immediately puts my heart at rest and enlightens my soul.

In that state of enlightenment I see that nature is not a thing in itself. It is an energy, a manifestation that belongs to some being, some entity, and it is that entity which we call God. It is only when we are unable to understand, to appreciate or to raise ourselves to this level - to realise that this is an omnipresent force,that God is an omnipresent being - that we form images of God, and regard God as a physical or psychological image. God is not confined to a temple, to my puja room, to a little statue, or to the havan-kund. God is everywhere but I am not able to apprehend this. I am not able to realise it, and therefore I make use of all these as aids. All action, and all of life flows not only from Him but in Him.

You cannot escape from life. You have no free will to change what has to happen. You may perhaps have no choice

concerning the way life has to flow, but one has a choice either to live an enlightened life or a stupid life. There is only one choice there. I can realise that it is the will of God that prevails here and therefore I can totally surrender to life, to God and participate in His will; or I might think this is right, that is not right. I want to do this, I want to gain this, I want pleasure, power and money and so I get worried about all these. Krishna tells us:

karmanai 'va hi saṁsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ
lokasaṁgraham evā 'pi saṁpaśyan kartum arhasi (III.20)

Even great sages like Janaka were active, and in and through that action they realised the source of action, that is God. We are all searching and looking for God. Krishna made it very simple and clear (III.15) God is the source of life, the source of all action; action arises from God. While you are busy in this world, doing whatever has to be done, constantly look into the springs of action. Action is not only good for the world, but it is also the path to God. By following the course of action, by looking for the source of action, one discovers God. There have been kings, dacoits, householders, swamis, farmers, tradesmen, craftsmen, cobblers and scavengers who have been enlightened. It is not the privilege of the priests or the swamis, but it is open to everybody.

saktāḥ karmany avidvāṁso yathā kurvanti bhārata
kuryād vidvāṁs tathā saktas cikīrsur lokasaṁgraham
(III.25)

The enlightened man is not to be distinguished or recognised by the clothes he wears, or even by the type of action that he performs. It is almost a commandment, that the enlightened man should behave externally in a way similar to that of an unenlightened person. The difference is in the inner attitude or the inner enlightened state. The one has found God, the other has not. The one realises that this is life, this is how it flows; the other is still caught up, trapped in his own ego-sense, in his own private idea. He is attached to the idea and the image that he has of himself, to the right action that he is supposed to do. Since he is

attached, the action comes back to him as a reaction. The enlightened man is free from that attachment. He also behaves in exactly the same way as the unenlightened man, appears in the same way, does what the unenlightened man does, but in a completely different spirit.

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III

Natural action which happens and which arises from life itself is right action. In that there is no conflict, no confusion. As a matter of fact action in itself does not create any problem. My sitting here and talking creates no problem. When the mind or the emotion interferes in it, then with these two the self arises; "I am talking to you". Then there is a problem.

The following example has often been given in spiritual literature. Though you have two eyes, they somehow create a single vision. It's an extraordinary thing. We never think of these simple every-day phenomena and therefore they go unnoticed. When the eyes are open and there is light, there is looking, there is seeing, and in that sight there is no discrimination - discrimination in a certain special sense. The seeing itself does not tell you,"He is a good man, he is a bad man", or "She is beautiful, she is ugly", or "This is good and this is evil". That is, the eyes can look at something which the mind considers evil, and at something which the mind considers good without any problem whatsoever. The problem arises elsewhere.

Natural action is God's action. That is what is called God's will. "Prakrti" is natural. When life flows on and action arises in that life, it is prakrti. The prakrti is active; that is, when the wind blows and the leaves shake that is prakrti, natural. There is nothing wrong in it and there is nothing right in it either. We do not know if this is true of the animal kingdom or the vegetable kingdom, but in our case there is a further complication and that is known as vikrti, which roughly could be translated as perversion. As a human

being you are born with a certain tendency and that is alright for the human being, that is natural. How do I find out that it is natural? That is a very difficult question to answer. Vaguely, all human beings behave in the same way. For instance, all mammals give birth to infants not eggs, so that you can say that anyone who gives birth to a baby instead of an egg is, let us say, a human being. The mammals also do, but let us confine it to human-beings. If someone looks like a girl but lays an egg, she is not a human being. Maybe it's grotesque but it underlines the point. It means a human being behaves in exactly the same way wherever he is found,

Now, when you come to the human being it is extremely difficult to find this because we have been perverted beyond recognition. It seems to be necessary not to take for granted anything as natural but to look for it. Yesterday it was said that if a man got drunk and started hitting other people, that is natural for a stupid person. "I am born vicious and rude.""Can I then bring that as an excuse?" I guess you can, provided you are prepared to admit to yourself that you are stupid. Doesn't it hurt you to realise, "I am stupid and therefore behaving in this manner"? In the case of these people who bring in an excuse that "This is my nature", they do not believe that that is a stupid person s behaviour. Within themselves in their own mind they say, "Oh no, I am only telling him that I am stupid and therefore it's natural to me, but in myself I think I am very clever". That is what is called perversion. If you realise that you are stupid, and therefore you are doing that, you'll immediately want to get out of that situation.

Then you would say that God has created diversity in this world, and this is part of the diversity. God has created diverse temperaments, diverse elements; one that is cold and one that is hot. It's quite possible that even in the human kingdom God has created some people with aggressive temperaments and some people with docile, passive temperaments. If that is so, there is absolutely nothing wrong in it. The world, this creation, has need for all these things. A scorpion stings, that is natural to it. If you spit on that scorpion saying, "You wretched scorpion,you vicious thing", it doesn't get upset. It moves on. Can you do that?

Then it's alright. God has created everything as it should be, but there is a certain perversity within myself which creates a problem, which brings about psychological unhappiness.

prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇaiḥ karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ
ahaṁkāravimūḍhātmā karta 'ham iti manyate (III.27)

When the eyes are open and there is light, there is sight and the fool thinks, "I see". Now, where does this ahamkara arise? One must distinguish between what is ahambhava and what is ahamkara. The similarity is in the 'aham'. What is 'aham'? "I am." It even sounds similar: aham - "I am". Just as in nature there are the various elements, in this human personality also there are the same corresponding elements. For instance, there is light and within you is sight. There is sound and within there are not merely the ears, but the sense of hearing. The sense of hearing is already a complicated affair. It is not what your ear represents. Even if you are stone-deaf you are probably hearing something within yourself. Even if you are absolutely blind, you are seeing something. That is, the instrument, the origin of vision, is defective, but the indriya, the sense of sight is active. It is that sense of sight which is seeing, because it is part of that total nature in which there is light. The same light is within me. This is an absurd expression because there is no division here, but I am creating it. Within me is the sense of sight and they interact constantly, just as in the total nature there is light which interacts within itself as light and sight.

Even so, in this cosmic nature called prakrti there is ahambhavana. There is the notion, the feeling, an awareness "I am". That is individuality. That's a pure sense of "I am". That is also part of cosmic nature. There is light throughout the universe and that light is found in all beings as the sense of sight. There is individuality throughout the universe and that individuality pulsates as "I am". There is no problem in that. This "I am" is therefore a natural feeling.

Ahamkara is different. That is, whereas this "I am" pulsates naturally, this ahamkara is a feeling or a notion or a thought that says, "I am doing this". That is perversion. If you go to the seaside you will probably appreciate it better.

The ocean has the characteristic of throwing up waves. This is natural to it. What flows onto the seashore, what breaks on the seashore? The waves being the ocean, it is the ocean that lashes on the seashore, not the waves. Somehow, in the case of the human being, a feeling arises, "I am seeing". Whereas it is the totality that is responsible for the seeing. Even though the feeling "I am" is also part of the totality, somehow it says, "I am seeing". That is, I am an independent entity, distinct and different from the totality; so I am seeing. It is there that the perversion arises.

If this perversion is avoided, one can still be "I am", one can still function in this world quite harmoniously, beautifully, without the "I am" arrogating to itself a function. "I am" is a being, ahambhavana is a being, ahamkara is a function. I have no independent function in this world. I am part of the whole thing; and as a part, whatever happens, happens. When there is no ahamkara or self-arrogating ego, then I am, and there is function, but that function is determined by the totality which is God, prakrti, or karma,

When nature functions in this manner there is no sin, no suffering, no defect. When Krishna said this, Arjuna asked a very beautiful question, which must have arisen in our minds also as we heard these beautiful words.

arjuna uvāca

atha kena prayukto 'yaṁ pāpaṁ carati pūruṣaḥ

anicchamm api vārṣṇeya balād iva niyojitaḥ (III.36)

If all these things happen naturally, why do people say that he is a vicious man and he is a sinner? If it is natural for him to do it, it's natural. Why should we turn around and say, "He is a vicious man and what he does is evil"? Krishna comes out with a beautiful answer:

śrībhagavān uvāca

kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajoguṇasamudbhavaḥ

mahāśano mahāpāpmā viddhy enam iha vairiṇam (III.37)

Nothing unnatural ever takes place on earth - this is important to bear in mind. All that happens, happens because of the

divine will; naturally if it is not the divine will, it could not happen. If you are accepting that something which is not natural can happen, you are creating a counter-force, an equally powerful demon, devil. On the one hand there is God, on the other hand there is the devil, both of them equally powerful. Then there are some divine actions and some diabolical actions. The source of divine action is God, the source of diabolical action is the devil. This leads to all kinds of complications; first of all to this theory or concept that God is not omnipresent.

In the face of this truth, how does on reconcile what is called evil or sin? Krishna gives a very simple answer:

kāma eṣa krodha eṣa rajogunasamudbhavaḥ

Sin is desire or craving and hate; these two are the sources of the perversion called evil. What happens, happens, in spite of you, regardless of your private fancy. If it happens through the instrumentality of what is known as your body or your personality, it still happens. Watch, observe, see what your mind is doing, what your heart is doing in that situation. Is there a craving in your heart which seems to be the source of this action? Then there is evil. While the action is happening, something cuts through and says, "I want this to happen, I desire this, I crave for this". If the craving is not there, there is no psychological disturbance either. Instead of trying to adjust to the action, trying to fiddle around with what I want to do, what I don t want to do, focus all your attention within to see that there is no craving, no hate.

This teaching seems to be almost incomprehensible because we are totally unaware of a psychological condition where there is no love and no hate, no desire and no aversion. We are so heavily conditioned, polluted, or perverted by this notion, that to us pure action is totally irrelevant, non-existent. We are total strangers to this natural pehnomenon, to nature, to God, so that this doesn't make any sense at all. Krishna points out, "Let action, let life flow on, without being interfered with by kama, which is craving, desire, and krodha".

In order not to allow this to arise, there must be the direct vision that whether I wish for it or not that something

is going to happen. The sun shines not because I desire the sun to shine, or not to shine. There is absolutely nothing that I wish or do not wish, which is going to determine whether the sun should shine or not shine. When this inner intelligence sees this fact as a fact; that the world does not exist and function in accordance with what I desire or do not desire, that life will continue to flow whether you desire or do not desire, then the desire does not arise. It does not make you lazy, because you are also part of this movement called life, and therefore you will be forced to participate in it, in spite of your private fancy.

Only if you understand this correctly and clearly, does the Mahabarata story for instance make sense. People could fight each other without hate. We are told that gods walked into the bedroom of somebody like Kunti and gave her a child without any craving, it just happened. In our own mind these pure actions do not exist.

Our mind is so polluted that we associate these with some kind of hate or craving for pleasure. You may hate me with all your heart's content or wish that I may fall dead right now, but I'll still continue to live. You may love me with all your heart and soul, but I'll still die. Life flows on totally independent of your love and hate.

Where are these two forces called love and hate, desire and aversion?

indriyāṇi mano buddhir asyā 'dhiṣṭhānam ucyate

etair vimohayaty eṣa jñānam āvṛtya dehinam (III.40)

Watch and see. They cloud the sense and the mind, and they cloud a certain natural discriminating faculty called the buddhi. If you eliminate them from there, you are free. It is born of the mind, of the discriminating faculty, but it is found in the sense. You recognise that whereas the sense of hearing is neutral, it can hear anything; there is generated within it this craving for hearing something and an aversion to hearing something else. It is the craving for hearing something that disturbs the mental equilibrium, creates psychological distress, unhappiness, and perverts the whole situation. It is the aversion to hearing something that generates this distress. I am suffering unnecessarily.

Psychologists tell you that you may go deaf, temporarily deaf, you may go to sleep or you may even become unconscious. All these things happen because of this tremendous inner conflict. It arises as a cloud, God knows how.

These two forces, operating through the senses, the mind and the discriminating intellect, seem to cloud the inner intelligence and create perversion. He who is able to free himself from these is a wise man, and he is a natural person. If craving and repulsion do not arise in us, then life flows on naturally, and happily; life becomes divine. Life will still flow on; however much I crave for it, however much I hate it, action will still arise.

So, what is right action? How do I live in this world? This is not a serious question at all, because you are still going to live. You will still do what you have to do inspite of yourself. Is it possible while life flows on, while action flows on in this manner, for me to be observant constantly? Krishna has even shown us where to look: "Look at your own senses, look at your own mind, look in your own discriminating faculty, the deciding faculty called buddhi, to see if there is a craving there. Avoid it, eliminate it from there".

Then there is freedom. In that freedom there is natural action and in that natural action there is no problem, there is no confusion. Natural action arises, takes place and fulfills itself without confusion, without inner conflict, because the thought or feeling does not arise there; "I wish it were otherwise". Such a life is pure and divine. Krishna points out finally that this is possible, because the truth or the reality or the light within is superior, because it is beyond the senses, beyond the mind, beyond the intellect, beyond the discriminating intellect, the buddhi. The Lord who is seated in the hearts of all is supreme. He is untouched by these private desires, cravings, aversions and petty hatred. Resort to Him, surrender yourself to Him. In that there is freedom, salvation, right action and divinity.

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Lord Venkatesa